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MOTORBOOTY

NUMBER SEVEN
FALL 1994

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P.O. BOX 02007
DETROIT, MI 48202

__MOTORBOOTY #7__, Fall 1994. __MOTORBOOTY__ Magazine, "The Guardian Anglo of the Bozo Underground," is now published intermittently by MOTORBOOTY L.C. in the town that hate built.

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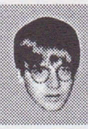
LOOSE

NEW YORK SCENE REPORT

The most talked-about shows in town, based on the number of Sonic Youth members in attendance.

BAND, VENUE	THURSTON	KIM	STEVE	LEE
Royal Trux Thread Waxing Space				(Kid)
Royal Trux CBGB's				
Sebadoh The Grand				
David Ware The Knitting Factory				
Guided By Voices Thread Waxing Space				
Boredoms The Knitting Factory				
The Fall The Academy				
Huggy Bear ABC No Rio				
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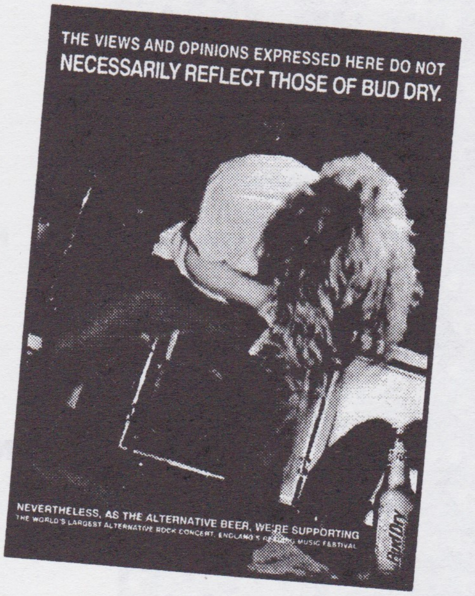
William Hooker The Knitting Factory				



MY SO-CALLED GRUNGE

An excerpt from the *Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang*:

grunge *n.,* [perh. back formation fr. GRUNGY; perh. alter. (infl. by *grime*) of GUNGE[1]] **1.** *Stu.*, a slovenly or offensive person. **1965** *N.Y. Times* (Dec. 27): "Wimp"... "grunge"... "dip"... "spook." All are bad. **2.** grease, grime, or excrement; (*also*) anything nasty or inferior. **1390** Chaucer *The Canterbury Tales*: "Whatt grunge thou chew/Thy fundament supplyes anew." **1625** Bacon *Essays*: "Money is like grundge, not good except it be spread." **1855** Whitman *Song of Myself*: "The scent of my grunge/Aroma finer than prayer." **1933** West *Miss Lonelyhearts*: "He coughed and swore, stepped into the grunge." **1955** Ginsberg *Howl:* Up from the shit! Up from the grunge! To the holy rooftops of the coolness of cool!" **3.** something dull or unappealing. **1987** RHD2: "He didn't know good music from grunge." **1988** Rubin *MOTORBOOTY* #2: "The songs on *Screaming Life* either boil at a high speed or cook at a slow simmer, alternating between garage grunge feedback and polished studio shimmer."

BO

MUSIC TO FUCK TO – A MOTORBOOTY GUIDE TO THE DIRTY DOZEN

Chances are, the last time you made whoopie you were listening to "Mary Had a Little Lamb" on an Edison Canister. However, should you engage in any connubial activity in the future, feel free to consult this list of aural aphrodisiacs selected to enhance your carnal shenanigans.

1. FUNKADELIC: *FUNKADELIC*

When you and your paramour seek glutinous union with the ageless and mysterious font of woo, make sure *Funkadelic* is on the hi-fi—if you can't get busy then, you never will. The world would be a much funkier place if everyone were conceived to the seamy strains of this lascivious LP.

2. STOOGES: *FUN HOUSE*

Those still laboring under the romantic notion that sex is somehow about sweet nothings, *petit morts,* and afterglow should steer clear of this carnivorous celebration of tough love. Music to rile the savage beast (with two backs).

2. MARVIN GAYE: *LET'S GET IT ON*

The title of this one says it all. In fact, a mere mention of the catalog number should be enough to uncinch the britches of any prospective notch on the old bedpost.

3. MILES DAVIS: *AGHARTA*

Free jazz for lovers.

4. VOID: *FAITH/VOID*

A real primal-scene supporter, this punk classic suggests nothing if not an all-ages, jackboot-knockin,' blitzkrieg boff. Like hardcore itself, it'll be over almost before it starts—a true flash in the pants. Note: the Faith side is useful only as an ashtray for a post-coital cigarette.

5. GARY NUMAN: *THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE*

In a situation when kissing is just too personal but biological imperatives (or the terms of a particularly unwise bet) must be satisfied, try slapping on this paradoxically titled slab of sonic saltpeter while you go through the motions.

6. AC/DC: *FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK...WE SALUTE YOU*

In that crucial two minutes between "I-love-you" drunk and "Why-do-you-hate-me?" drunk, this metallic manifesto will surely help incite one of the best experiences you're ever likely to forget.

7. *THE STING* SOUNDTRACK.

If you're one of the many people whose marital aid collection consists primarily of straw boaters, stick-on handlebar mustaches, and a racy pair of spats, you already know that in the absence of a player piano, these upbeat ragtime ditties are the only acceptable accompaniment for filthy fin de siècle fun.

8. BIG BLACK: *SONGS ABOUT FUCKING.*

Despite its clever title, this disc is best suited to no kind of fucking at all. Instead, it's a near-perfect audio companion for a good, old-fashioned orgy of one, particularly if it takes place in a college dorm room.

10. DON RICKLES: *HELLO DUMMY*

If you're playing under the Antioch Rules, there's no teammate like Don Rickles. When your polite request to "escalate the intimacy" to the next well-defined level is cordially rebuffed, you'll still have Mr. Warmth in the background, drowning out the awkward silence with a politically incorrect laughtrack.

11. *THE PATSY CLINE STORY*

Why not start lamenting the end of your relationship before it's even begun? If the songs don't depress you enough, the thought of Patsy's tragic demise in a fiery plane crash will have you both so forlorn you'll soon seek the comfort of each other's pants.

12. WALTER MURPHY AND THE BIG APPLE BAND: *A FIFTH OF BEETHOVEN*

Dom Perignon, caviar, Chateaubriand, cherries jubilee, and that very special someone... only an ageless classic could be the soundtrack for the nightcap. Let Walter and Co. stir your discriminating loins for a night of glorious fucking.

Sunday

7:30PM
10PM

7 AMERICA'S FUNNIEST PEOPLE (CC, 5521
Guests: Coolio and Body Count, who perform "Body M.F. Count". Also: pranks submitted by home viewers and snuff films featuring Ricki Lake and Tony Danza.

USA DUCKMAN (CC)—Cartoon 736095
Enemies Duckman and Bernice pose as husband and wife to prevent Ajax from marrying his high-school principal (Teri Garr).

8 PM **2 11 MOVIE (CC)—Drama** *3:00* ★★ 202543/38470
"Been a Son: The Kurt Cobain Story" (Made for TV; 1994). The true-life rags-to-riches story of Kurt Cobain (Brad Pitt), an alienated young rebel whose unexpected rise to stardom ends in tragedy. Courtney Love: Juliette Lewis. Krist Novoselic: Michael Richards. Jonathon Poneman: Jim Belushi. [Viewer discretion: violence, explicit drug use, adult situations, grunge music]

4 MOVIE (CC)—Drama *3:00* ★★★ 216543
"The Ballad of Kurt and Courtney" (Made for TV; 1994). Director Alex Cox's fanciful retelling of the troubled relationship between rock star Kurt Cobain (Gary Oldman) and his celebrity-seeking wife, Courtney Love (Chloe Webb). Dave Grohl: Steve Buscemi. Bruce Pavitt: Adam Sandler. Gary Gersh: Adam Ant. Darby Crash: Puck.

7 MOVIE (CC)—Drama *3:00* ★ 216543
"Good Sister/Bad Sister: The Courtney Love Story" (Made for TV; 1994). The authorized biography of Courtney Love (Drew Barrymore), a beautiful, talented young girl trying to make a name for herself amidst the oppressive patriarchy of rock, from her humble beginnings as a starry-eyed fan to the tragic suicide of her rock-star husband Kurt Cobain (Leonardo DiCaprio). Julian Cope: Bronson Pinchot. Kat Bjelland: Linda Blair. Janet Billig: Mindy Cohn. Billy Corgan: Corey Haim. Kurt Loder: John Ritter.

TNT ON THE ROAD TO NIRVANA (CC) —Miniseries *3:00* 216543
(Part 9 of 16) While on tour in England, the boys find out that *Nevermind* has gone platinum. Kurt (Johnny Depp) is troubled by the news, but Dave (Pauly Shore) and Kris (Richard Moll) celebrate by donning dresses and flirting with punkers in Camden Town. Courtney: Tori Spelling. Steve Albini: Paul Reubens. David Geffen: Udo Kier. Jason Everman: Pete Best.

Additional Cast
Kim Gordon....................Katherine Hepburn
Thurston Moore............................Jay North
Mark Arm..........................Anson Williams

FOX FAMILY VALUES (CC)—*Comedy*
Kurdt (Corey Feldman) becomes suspicious when he happens upon Courtney (Christina Applegate) and Evan Dando (Bobcat Goldthwait) whispering in each other's ears. Unaware that they are planning his surprise intervention, Kurdt hires a private detective (Peter Falk) and a bumbling hit man (Jim Carrey). Wackiness ensues.

9 PM **32 CHICO AND THE HUMAN—*Com***
36 RUMPOLE OF THE BAILEY 1
56 HIN HIT PARADE—*Educ*

LOOSE

LEADERS OF THE OLD SCHOOL
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Now that punk's not dead anymore it may behoove you to know irrelevant minutiae like the name of the band Danzig was in before Danzig. So next time you're playing Punk Trivial Pursuit™ and the category is "Who the Fuck...?," check this update and your opponents will be amazed at how much you know about so little.

Spot: now deaf, operates a sperm bank in Austin, TX

Mugger, Nig Heist: Chippendale dancer, Phoenix, AZ

Dez Cadena, Black Flag: has mustache!

Jim Skafish: changed name to Nash Kato

Greg Ginn, Black Flag: released series of solo albums—*Ginnspiracy*, *Rock Ginn Roll*, and *To Be Ginntinued*

Shane "R&R Bank Robber" Williams: enjoying the attentions of scores of lonely men as the "sweetheart of cellblock C," California Men's Colony, San Luis Obispo

Donny the Punk: see Shane Williams

Sab Grey, Iron Cross: eminent drag queen, Fairfax, VA

Tesco Vee, Meatmen: elementary school teacher and erotic puppeteer, Falls Church, VA

Korey Clark, L-Seven: banned from Earth

Keith Morris, Circle Jerks: owns sensory-deprivation-tank franchise, Palm Desert, CA

Eugene, *Decline of Western Civilization*: sergeant in L.A.P.D.

Greg Norton, Hüsker Dü: performs as "The Cop" in Village People tribute act

Tim Yohannon: rich

Lydia Lunch: provides voiceovers for *The Brothers Grunt*

Grant Hart, Hüsker Dü: married to lesbian daughter of snow-removal magnate

Springa, SSD: method actor, Chicago, IL

Bob Stinson, Replacements: washes windshields in downtown Minneapolis

Rik L. Rik: arrested for starting dumpster fires in West Covina, CA

Geza X : curates touring exhibition of nude photographs of early Los Angeles punk rockers

Brian Baker, Minor Threat: underwent extensive tattoo removal, joined Bad Religion

H.R., Bad Brains: occasionally jams with Ziggy Marley

Dave Riley, Big Black: permanent fixture on the "backstage deli-tray" scene in Chicago, IL

Joey Shithead, D.O.A.: changed name to "Keighley," 1988; changed name back to "Shithead," 1994

Will Shatter, Flipper: dead

De Detroit, UXA: back in Detroit, writing horoscopes and exhibiting her Lichtensteinian paintings in local bars

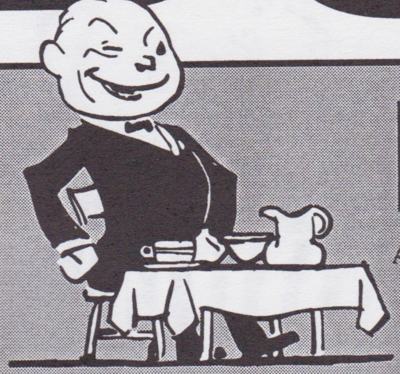
Chuck Dukowski, Black Flag: last seen wearing Hawaiian shirt and smoking joint outside Library Cafe, Phoenix, AZ

A Tinkle In Time
A MOTORBOOTY TIME CAPSULE

Created to immortalize our culture and to aid future archaeologists, time capsules are generally filled with things like recordings of Beethoven sonatas, Fonzie posters, and acid-washed "chaps-style" pants. Concerned that such flotsam might give a false impression of what our era is really like, we at MOTORBOOTY filled our own capsule with cultural relics that we believe better reflect the attitudes, tastes, and mores of late 20th century civilization.

- Videotapes containing edited highlights from Chuck Berry's *Fecal Follies*, Jeff and Tonya's wedding night revelry, *The Best of NHL Hockey Fights*, and every episode of *Cop Rock*
- He Who Can Not Be Named's soiled don't-speak-of-'ems
- Miles Davis' hair-weave
- Maggie Estep's panty sweat
- Complete recorded works of Nicodemus
- The entire series of Francesco Scavullo's Shirley Hemphill nudes
- Mayim Bialik, TV's *Blossom*
- Autographed photos of Lisa Suckdog, Lisa Loeb, and Lisa Lisa
- Soul on a roll
- Urkel mask
- A lid of monkey-paw, a six-pack of near beer, and a case of Whip-Its
- Dow® Do-It-Yourself home breast-implant kit
- Beeper Gum and Nutrageous bars
- Bound volume of MOTORBOOTY Magazine issues 1-7

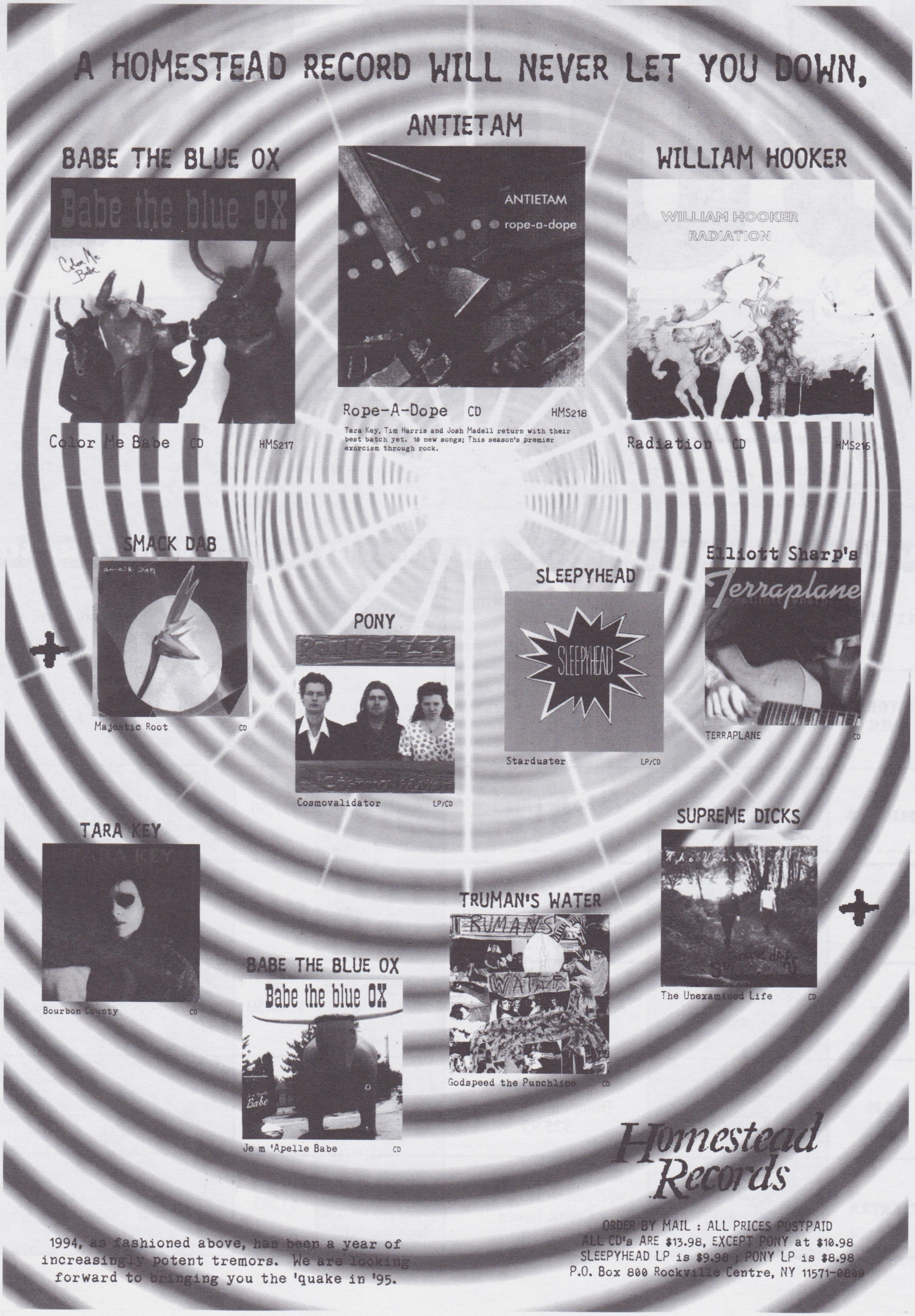
BOOTY



NO FREE LUNCH

Among the most common mating rituals in the courtship between band and major label is the meal on the company tab. During these little trysts, a label representative takes the group to an out-of-the-way place and tries to woo them with food, drinks, and sweet talk of artistic freedom. By playing "hard to get," a coy band can milk the situation for goodly portions of belly timber before they finally put out. Here are the results of one hungry young rock unit's culinary tour of the industry.

LABEL	RESTAURANT	CHEAPEST ENTREE	TAG-ALONGS	BILL	BUSINESS DISCUSSED
HOLLYWOOD	Ruby's of Dallas Dallas, TX	Blackened Skatewing Beurre Blanc $16.50	Two old girlfriends	$320	"The Fluid was a fluke."
VICTORY/ BMG	Siam Garden Philadelphia, PA	Gang Kew Warn $14.95	Employees from Philly Record Exchange	$163.25 plus cost of window	"I see Jimmy Page producing your record."
COLUMBIA	The Big O Pittsburgh, PA	Curly Fries $1.25	Dave Martin and comedian Louie Anderson	$37.50	"I'm the one who wrote 'Walk Like an Egyptian.'"
MERCURY	Indigo Atlanta, GA	Mahi-Mahi in Puff Pastry w/Andouille Feta Pesto $21.50	Hungry fans band met at soundcheck	$408.24	"I know the Jerky Boys."
DGC	Star Top Cafe Chicago, IL	Loin of Pork en Croute w/ Fennel Melon Chutney $14.95	Jan Terri and Ferrari	$263.50	"Al Bini should record your band."
A&M	Don Quixote's New York, NY	Cuban Paella con Bluepoint Lobster $25.95	Two publicists, a photographer, and Faust's sound man	$597.29	None
ELEKTRA	The Whitney Detroit, MI	Mesquite Grilled Squab w/Horseradish Caviar Creme Sauce $32.50	Band's manager and three people who hate the band	$1265	A&R man's crush on band's drummer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Babe the blue OX
Color Me Babe CD HMS217
ANTIETAM
ANTIETAM
rope-a-dope
Rope-A-Dope CD HMS218
Tara Key, Tim Harris and Josh Madell return with their best batch yet. 10 new songs; This season's premier exorcism through rock.
WILLIAM HOOKER
WILLIAM HOOKER
RADIATION
Radiation CD HMS216
SMACK DAB
Majestic Root CD
PONY
Cosmovalidator LP/CD
SLEEPYHEAD
SLEEPYHEAD
Starduster LP/CD
Elliott Sharp's
Terraplane
TERRAPLANE CD
TARA KEY
Bourbon County CD
BABE THE BLUE OX
Babe the blue OX
Je m 'Apelle Babe CD
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ROCK *Lit*

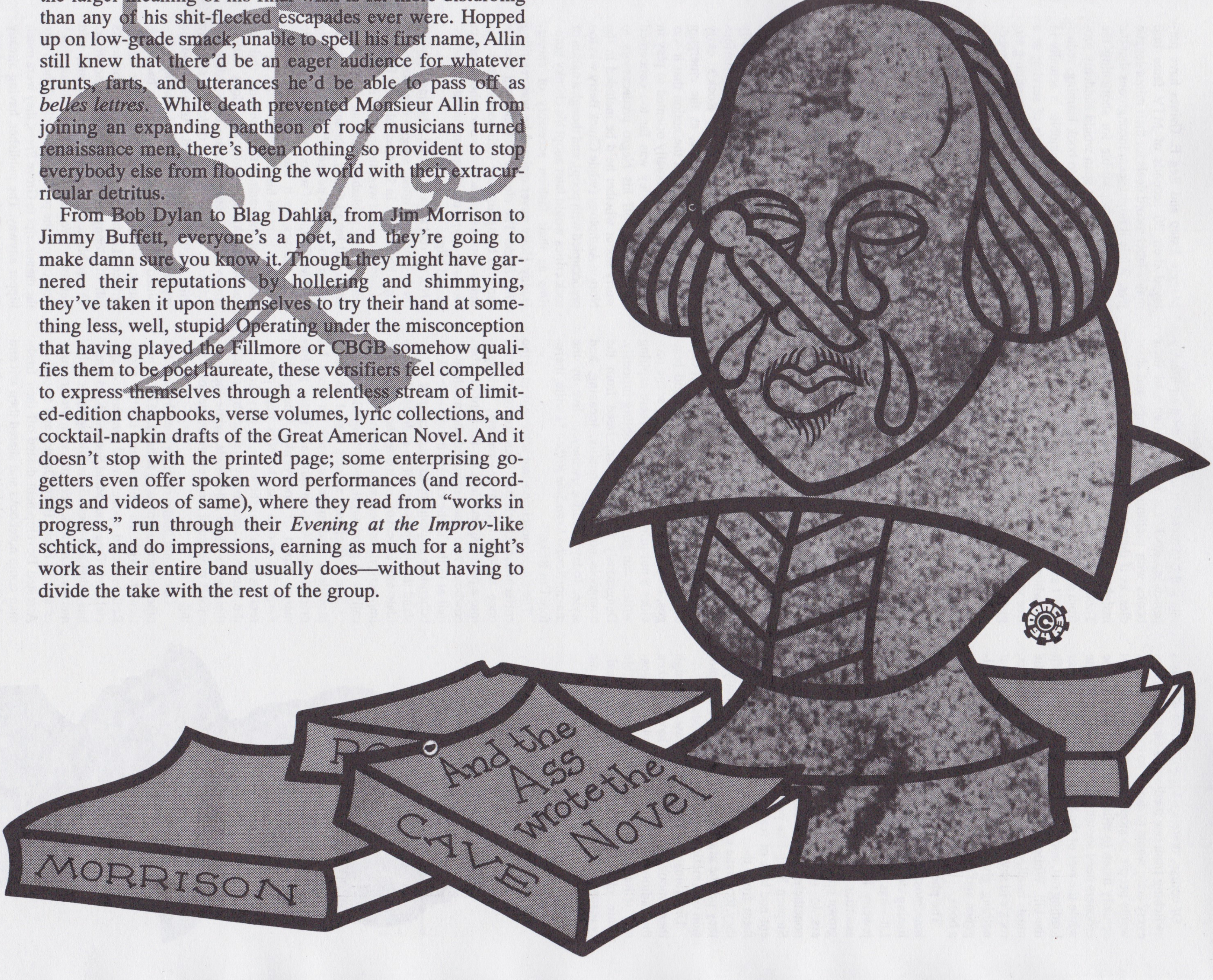
A MOTORBOOTY Survey

Reported By Rubin, Michaels, Merline, Rice, and Henssler

After an interminable career spent selflessly bringing performance art to the people, cultural provocateur G.G. Allin found he had reached an impasse. No longer satisfied with having reduced punk to a four-letter word, Mr. Allin sought an even more shocking medium of self-expression, and seemed ready to announce his new direction. Alas, cruel fate intervened: wearing his 16-year-old girlfriend's miniskirt and his dog's collar, he saddled up the white steed and gave himself a fatal overdose of punk credibility. As eternity overcame him, Allin gasped to his friend Johnny Puke, "We gotta do that spoken-word tour, man." With that declaration, the muse left him, and the would-be bard stage-dived from our earthly realm forever.

While G.G. may have died as he lived, a pathetic loser, the larger meaning of his final wish is far more disturbing than any of his shit-flecked escapades ever were. Hopped up on low-grade smack, unable to spell his first name, Allin still knew that there'd be an eager audience for whatever grunts, farts, and utterances he'd be able to pass off as *belles lettres*. While death prevented Monsieur Allin from joining an expanding pantheon of rock musicians turned renaissance men, there's been nothing so provident to stop everybody else from flooding the world with their extracurricular detritus.

From Bob Dylan to Blag Dahlia, from Jim Morrison to Jimmy Buffett, everyone's a poet, and they're going to make damn sure you know it. Though they might have garnered their reputations by hollering and shimmying, they've taken it upon themselves to try their hand at something less, well, stupid. Operating under the misconception that having played the Fillmore or CBGB somehow qualifies them to be poet laureate, these versifiers feel compelled to express themselves through a relentless stream of limited-edition chapbooks, verse volumes, lyric collections, and cocktail-napkin drafts of the Great American Novel. And it doesn't stop with the printed page; some enterprising go-getters even offer spoken word performances (and recordings and videos of same), where they read from "works in progress," run through their *Evening at the Improv*-like schtick, and do impressions, earning as much for a night's work as their entire band usually does—without having to divide the take with the rest of the group.



Of course, there's a long tradition of artists switching from one medium to another: Just as every actor wants to direct, so too every singer wants people to stop looking at their hair and actually listen to what they have to say. These crooners need something to do to pass the time while the rest of the band is soundchecking or loading out, and jotting in journals seems to fit the bill. While they may not have chosen the most intellectually demanding of pursuits, rock's id savants are sage enough to know that nothing gives one the appearance of intelligence and sophistication quite like putting out a book.

The phenomenon of musicians turning their innermost creative demons into lucrative publishing deals—or, as we like to call it, Rock Lit—has proliferated like goatees and genital jewelry in recent years. Despite the media's assertion that the generation of kids who have grown up in front of television no longer bothers to read, determined performers have nonetheless cranked out high-minded pulp at a Stephen King-like pace. Neither taste nor talent nor lack of real-life experience can deter them from their self-appointed rounds; were they to pursue excellence half as diligently as they pursue attention, we'd have a real explosion of American letters on our hands.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. Although these moonlighting musicians have forsaken the traditional show business staple of the gossipy tell-all auto-bio for the more respectable genres of poetry and fiction, their work usually reads more like "Dear Diary" than "Call me Ishmael." In an effort to flesh out their literary personas, Rock Lit authors often pad their books with preliminary scrawlings and doodles, as if their poor penmanship offers some insight into their moments of inspiration. Though they may not be able to tell a quatrain from a Zildjian or an iamb from an amp, they aren't ashamed to liberally indulge their artistic whims, charging a pretty penny for their free verse and freehand sketches. Some apologists excuse such Rock Lit excesses, claiming that as long as the kids are buying books by Rollins instead of handguns by Colt, the world is a better place. But these people are wrong: in some situations guns *are* better than butter.

In the past, the appeal of these works was more or less limited to record collectors, but these days Rock Lit has found a new audience with the resurgence of coffeehouse culture. With its wistful nostalgia for beat-era accouterments like stiff cups of joe, open-mike free-association, and bongos, the contemporary coffeehouse scene provides a nurturing environment where aspiring writers can go to be seen scribbling furiously. Dangerously alert on bean, freed from the bourgeois notions of quality, meaning, and style, today's Coffee Achievers live by the maxim *Scribo Ergo Sum Rilke*—"I write, therefore I'm Rilke."

The single most important achievement of the coffeehouse klatch has been to transform a once solitary endeavor—namely, writing—into a public spectacle. Like the herd of urban cowboys who once mounted the mechanical bull at Gilley's, the current throng of bookish bohemians stepping up to the open mike understand that the presence of an audience can validate any endeavor, no matter how foolish or impractical; as long as it's delivered emphatically with good angst, everything's legitimate.

The coffeehouse scene's casual standards provide a readymade audience for Rock Lit practitioners, who in turn take to the performance aspect of poetry like Americans to Paris. It's a deal that benefits both parties: rockers are natural showoffs, so they thrive on the highbrow credibility gained by reading their lyrics Steve Allen-style, while the audience is relieved of the tiresome burden of reading.

One could blame it all on Juan Valdez, but other culprits seem to be at hand. MTV in particular, with its interstitial poetry spots, Rollins-hosted spoken-word *Unplugged* special, and "Free Your Mind Spoken Word Tour," has aided and abetted the bibliographic delinquency of minors. Recently, such literary voices as Liz Phair, Evan Dando, and Speech of Arrested Development dusted off their freshman-comp notebooks and shared their wit and whimsy with celebrity-conscious scholars across America, while Lower East Side poets Maggie Estep and Reg E. Gaines have parlayed their 30 seconds of MTV fame into major-label record deals for their minor-league jive. While it might seem incongruous that the channel most responsible for shortening the American attention span would suddenly promote something akin to book-learning, reducing the soliloquy to a soundbite is actually in keeping with MTV's agenda of serving as a cultural Cuisinart. Besides, by committing airtime to such purportedly vocabulary-expanding fare, MTV can claim that it offers "educational programming" next time some congressman tries to blame a serial killing on *Beavis and Butt-Head.*

> **"Sir, I admit your gen'ral rule**
> **That every poet is a fool;**
> **But you yourself may serve to show it,**
> **That every fool is not a poet."**
> **—*Alexander Pope***

PAPERBACK WRITER

Though today's plugged-in poets think that they've discovered fire, Rock Lit actually has a rich and hilarious history. Rock's early years were free-verse-free, as the emerging music struggled against the notion that it was too black and too sexually oriented to play in Peoria. Elvis Presley was far too concerned with ripping off his Negro predecessors to worry about whether he'd be included in the Norton Anthology (while Chuck Berry was too preoccupied with poop), and though a nation of rock critics would later adopt his chunky hornrims as their fashion accessory of choice, Buddy Holly never claimed he was rewriting *Billy Budd*. The closest rock and roll records came to being equated with books was when funny-boneless preachers burned them both in the same pyre of blasphemous, demon-possessed bilge.

No, the real saga of Rock Lit begins where so many other pop music shaggy-dog stories do, with the Beatles. In 1964, as sales for Beatles-related *chazzerai* went through the roof, a cunning British publisher, Jonathan Cape, commissioned John Lennon, "the smart Beatle," to write a book. ("'Is he deep?'" wondered young Paul McCartney of schoolboy chum John. "He wore glasses, so it was possible.") Lennon, high as a loon on his newfound fame, agreed. Instead of beginning the daunting task of assembling his first work of serious fiction, however, he spent his spare time hiding the existence of his wife and child and sleeping with anything that moved. As his deadline approached, Lennon panicked, having committed to paper only some random backstage ruminations. When the fateful day finally arrived, Lennon turned in several notebooks full of sloppy sketches and nonsense verse. The publisher was dumbfounded, and told Lennon, "We can't possibly publish this." Lennon told the publisher to fuck off, he'd take the manuscript to Grove Press, they were much hipper anyway. The publisher, having already spent millions of pounds promoting the book, had no choice but to release it. As the book

MATCH THE ART WITH THE ARTIST

Like William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, many Rock Lit works are copiously illustrated. Just as Blake's meticulously detailed illuminations reflected the wisdom and grace of the verses they surrounded, these authors' stylish renderings perfectly depict the integrity and depth of the accompanying text. With this in mind, try to match the art with the appropriate artist.

1 **JIMI HENDRIX**

2 **JOHN LENNON**

3 **JIM MORRISON**

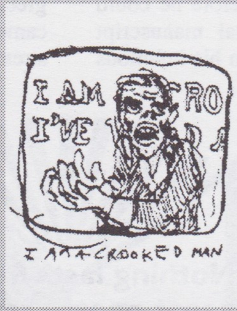
4 **STEPHEN TUNNEY**

5 **NICK CAVE**

6 **DEBBIE (AGE 5)**

7 **PATTI SMITH**

8 **EXENE CERVENKA**



A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

SOLUTION: 1 (E), 2 (F), 3 (H), 4 (C), 5 (A), 6 (G), 7 (D), 8 (B)

came out, everyone, including Lennon, was prepared for a massive critical and commercial disaster.

Remarkably, the book, *In His Own Write*, was a sensation on both sides of the Atlantic. Both publisher and author alike were shocked as the book quickly rose to the top of bestseller lists and was praised by critics. "He writes like a Beatle possessed .... Inspired nonsense," proclaimed *The New York Times Book Review*. Lines like "'Speak up, come forth, you ravel me,'/I potty menthol shout" brought frequent comparisons to Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, and the author of *Ulysses*, although hindsight reveals Lennon's style to be more Joyce Jillson than James Joyce. However, in March 1964, *In His Own Write* won the prestigious Foyle's Literary Prize. In his acceptance speech Lennon mumbled, "Thank you very much, you've got a lucky face," then fled. He was now, as Paul would later sing, a "Paperback Writer."

So remunerative was Lennon's first book that a second was quickly commissioned, but while *In His Own Write* was written for fun, *A Spaniard in the Works* was penned strictly to fulfill a contract. "Once it became 'We want another book from you, Mr. Lennon,' I could only loosen up to it with a bottle of Johnnie Walker," Lennon said later, "that's why I don't write any more." When *Spaniard* eventually came out in 1965, however, it duplicated not only the "substance" of *In His Own Write* ("Softly softly, treads the Mungle/Thinner thorn behaviour street/Whorg canteel whorth bee asbin?/Can we so all complete") but the brisk sales as well. Lennon considered cutting a spoken word LP in early 1965, but in an act of charity worthy of Mother Teresa herself, thought better of it. Eventually a contract for a third book was tendered, but Lennon wrote only one piece, blew his deadline, and the project was finally scrapped.

We'd love to blame this (like everything else) on Yoko Ono, but Lennon wouldn't meet her until some three years later (although she did contribute her own literary lemon, *Grapefruit*, to the genre in 1968). Once they did meet, however, she encouraged his writerly impulses. "John wrote very quickly," Yoko recalls in the afterword to his posthumous collection *Skywriting By Word of Mouth*, "he never had to stop to think." "None of it has to make sense and if it seems funny then that's enough" wrote Paul McCartney in *In His Own Write*'s introduction, unknowingly providing the rationalization for three decades of Rock Lit to come. But Lennon himself put it best: "When you're dead, anything's funny."

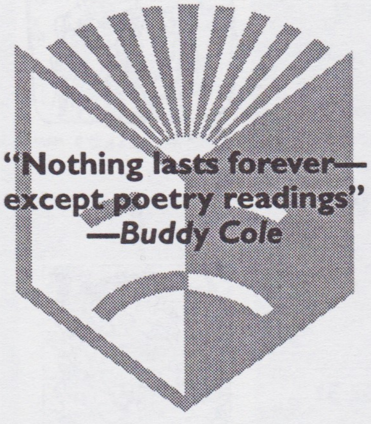
GET SICK, GET WELL, HANG AROUND AN INK WELL

In 1964, Bob Dylan had become the first rock personality to be treated as a literary figure. A few years earlier, as a University of Minnesota

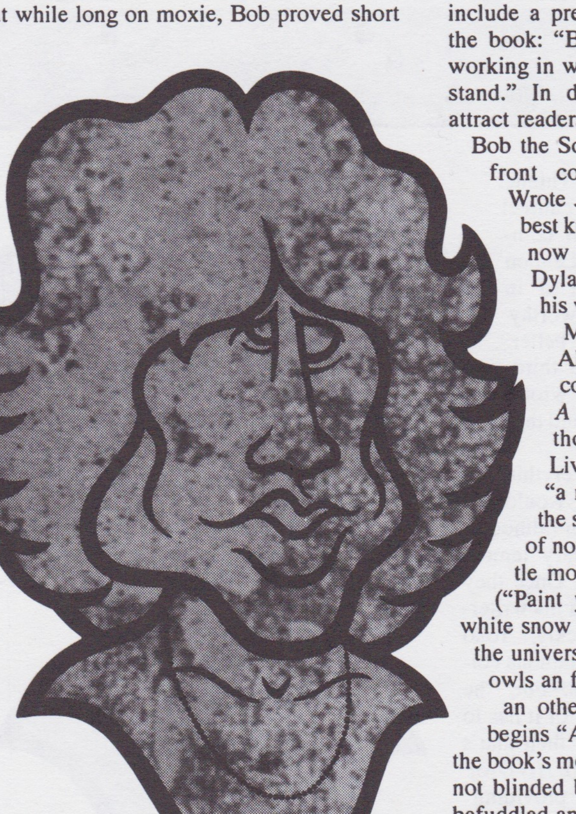
frat boy, he laid the groundwork for this lofty treatment by changing his given name "Zimmerman" to "Dylan" in honor of Dylan Thomas, before dropping out of school altogether. Once his recording career was underway, Dylan was celebrated as a messiah for his fanciful lyrics alone; *The New York Times* even called him "the poet laureate of young America." But before Dylan could be honored with rock's first Nobel Prize, Lennon stole his thunder. What Dylan needed to further bolster his reputation was a book, and so he set to writing one, or at least talking about doing so. Throughout 1965 Dylan told interviewers that the manuscript for his magnum opus was completed, though that was strictly wishful thinking, as he was still carrying around galleys on tour in 1966, making "last minute corrections."

By then, Dylan had been upstaged not only by Lennon but by the 1966 publication of *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me*, a novel by his friend and fellow folksinger Richard Farina, who was killed in a motorcycle accident before he could go electric and get baptized. Stung by his competitors' breakthroughs, Dylan rose to the challenge and signed with Macmillan. "Other publishers were envious," reads the publisher's note from *Tarantula*, written by an anonymous executive at Macmillan. "'You'll sell a lot of copies of *that*....Besides, look how many copies of John Lennon's book were sold. This would be twice as big—maybe more.' Didn't matter what was in it."

But while long on moxie, Bob proved short on follow-through. "We weren't quite sure what to make of the book—except money," confessed the exec. "We didn't know what Bob was up to." As the book's release date approached, Macmillan unleashed a barrage of promotional materials, from shopping bags to buttons, and sent advance galleys to all the major media outlets, but still Dylan refused to stop dithering with the text. Before he could turn in the much-awaited final manuscript however, Dylan was involved in his infamous motorcycle accident; evidently trying to emulate Farina, Dylan was almost killed, although it was entirely possible that the wreck was an elaborate excuse to get an extension on his deadline. In any case, the book project, like Dylan himself, was put into traction.



By 1968, however, all those galleys that Macmillan had circulated were being bootlegged and excerpted without permission. After much discussion, Macmillan and Dylan finally agreed to publish the book in 1971 without Bob's "changes." Needless to say, after over a half decade of hype the results were disappointing, prompting the publisher to include a preface practically apologizing for the book: "Bob has always been out ahead, working in ways which can be hard to understand." In desperation, Macmillan tried to attract readers by linking Bob the Scribbler to Bob the Songwriter, with a note inside the front cover that began "Bob Dylan Wrote ..." followed by a list of 15 of his best known songs, capped off with "and now *TARANTULA*"—implying that Dylan's book was at least as good as his voice.



Most sane observers felt otherwise. Although *Tarantula* was no more coherent than *In His Own Write* or *A Spaniard in the Works*, Dylan thought he had one-upped the Liverpudlian by billing his book as "a novel." In fact, it was nothing of the sort, being simply an aimless quilt of non sequiturs bound together by little more than the glue along its spine. ("Paint your shoes delilah—ye walk on white snow where a nosebleed would disturb the universe... down these narrow alleys of owls an flamenco guitar players, jack paar an other sex symbols are your prizes" begins "Advice to Hobo's Model," among the book's more lucid passages.) Those readers not blinded by bathtub acid were completely befuddled and the book met with overwhelming critical disapproval, with Dylan's genius status taking its first serious hit. Over time, the *Tarantula* embarrassment was eclipsed by new pratfalls, including *Planet Waves* and *Slow Train Coming*, but like a savvy cocker spaniel, Dylan took the critical nose slap to heart and from then on kept his florid ravings to himself. Such a lesson was lost, however, on a budding generation of rock wordsmiths, who were just beginning their ascent up Mount Parnassus.

CLASSIC ROCK CIVILIZATION 101

Although *Tarantula* was pummeled by the press, such reviewer reprobation was rare. By and large the only negative assessments that greeted rock performers' printed expressions came from doddering holdovers in the mainstream media. Elsewhere, a groundswell of musicians-cum-muse-chasers sallied forth and an entire publishing industry rose up to boost their literary efforts. Thus was born the "rock critic," pop culture oracles whose mediation was needed to interpret the increasingly baroque blathering that was being offered up as entertainment.

In 1968 came the book that would become the essential text in defense of the new pop literature: Richard Goldstein's *The Poetry of Rock*. One of the first writers of the embryonic rock crit genre to be taken seriously, Goldstein provided Rock Lit with its crucial critical underpinning. Essentially a reprinting of song lyrics by artists as various as Phil Ochs, Paul Simon, and the Bee Gees, coupled with Goldstein's keen analytical perceptions ("Elvis Presley was the Rasputin of rock," "Brian Wilson is the *mettre-en-scene* of the Beach Boys," and "Procol Harum reminds me of an intellectual, ever fighting to suppress his Steppenwolf"), *The Poetry of Rock* argued that "some of the best poetry of our time may well be contained within these slurred couplets." "Rock is de rigeur," Goldstein boldly proclaimed, taking cultural conservatives head on. "Even Plato's Cave has become a discotechque."

Central to Goldstein's case was the understanding that "Awkwardness (and some of these songs are terribly ungainly) is unforgivable in serious verse but can be charming in rock....Rock cultivates cliches. Pop lyricists cherish their involvement with the mundane." Not only did Goldstein explore the literary aspects of pop lyrics, he did so with no small number of his own writerly flourishes. "But do these lyrics really amount to art?," he asked. "Does Wordsworth speak to Donovan from the great beyond? Is John Lennon's wordplay truly Joycean? Is Bob Dylan the Walt Whitman of the juke-box?" Goldstein's conclusion? "Rock swings free, embracing chaos, and laughing at the notion that there could be anything more worth celebrating than the present. Rock is, and always has been, the sacred squeal of now. It's got a damned good beat. And you can dance to it."

Despite all his overblown rhetoric, Goldstein's main assertion in defense of rock verse was on the money—"that mass culture can be as vital as high art" (although such a notion ignored the question of how any other art form could be as "high" as rock). By lobby-

ing for rock as something worthy of academic study, critics like Goldstein attempted to legitimize their own entertainment as belonging to the life of the mind instead of to the life of the booty, rationalizing all the wasted hours of their teenage and college years. It was an excellent message for recruiting a new generation of college kids for the rock critic corps, as students were all too eager to bombard their teachers with THC-aided musings on the three records of George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass* instead of actually plowing through all three books of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Although *The Book of Rock Lists* would later include *The Poetry of Rock* as #5 on its survey of "The 10 Worst Rock Books," and while most readers would file *The Poetry of Rock* somewhere between *Love Story* and *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, such naysaying did not deter Rock Literati from taking the volume as a resounding endorsement of their efforts, and began realizing the more sinister possibilities the book had suggested.

SHAMAN'S BLUES

The luckiest beneficiary of the newly enlightened attitudes toward Rock Lit was Jim Morrison, the premier figure of rock's Dead Poetaster's Society. Before becoming the "poet laureate of whipping it out," Morrison was just another pretentious UCLA film student who most likely would have ended up writing scripts for *Love American Style* had he not developed a fatal fascination with leather pants. Distraught about receiving a "D" on his final film-class project, Morrison fled school on the eve of graduation and spent the rest of his days trying to avenge his ruined GPA by adding his clumsy attempts at "heaviness" to the lightweight chart efforts of the Doors (a name taken from *The Doors of Perception* by Aldous Huxley, who had himself borrowed the expression from Blake).

Playing the monkey to keyboardist Ray Manzarek's organ grinder, Morrison sprinkled his band's bottomless Vegas schmaltz with insightful gems like "She has robes and she has monkeys/Lazy diamond-studded flunkies." Not satisfied with including the Nietzsche-inspired, half-recited, half-sung, 11-plus-minute Oedipal farce "The End" on the Doors debut LP ("anyone who disputes the concept of rock literature had better listen long and hard to this song," wrote Goldstein, calling the piece "Joycean pop"), Morrison imposed rock's first full-blown spoken-word piece, "Horse Latitudes," on the Doors' second album. Set to chaotic piano pounding and groupie shrieking, the dramatically rendered rant about swimming thoroughbreds in "mute nostril agony" was excruciating enough to cause acute eardrum agony in sensitive listeners.

By the group's third record, Morrison's need to assert his poetic presence was so strong that he concocted a rambling meditation on tribal themes, "The Celebration of the Lizard," that ran over 40 minutes long in concert. This "theatre composition" was the first of Morrison's several ham-fisted attempts to integrate Native American lore into rock, although he succeeded only in putting the "sham" into "shaman," invoking the spirits of long-dead Indians with a simpleminded singlemindedness that would make Iron Eyes Cody sob. Morrison was never able to replicate the work's grandiose pomposity in the studio, though he did print the entire libretto inside the band's *Waiting for the Sun* and adopted the work's reptilian namesake as his full-time alter ego—a convenient scapegoat for his binge-drinking and trouser-dropping.

But mere gatefold sleeves were too small a canvas to contain Morrison's creative yearnings. Egged on by beat poet Michael McClure, he published his first book of poems *The Lords* as a limited edition vanity press keepsake in 1969, immediately followed by *The New Creatures*. His brain squirming like a toad, McClure went so far as to crow of Morrison, "I know of no better poet of Jim's generation," while critic Patricia Kenealy wrote, "If T.S. Eliot had been a rock group, he would have been the Doors and done *The Soft Parade*," prompting Morrison to haul off and marry her.

The Doors' audience, however, wasn't always so receptive. At a 1969 LA concert, Morrison took a break from sunning his snake to read a new poem, "Ode to LA While Thinking of Brian Jones, Deceased," passing out xeroxes of the piece to the crowd. When fans filed out at the end of the night, the hall was littered with thousands of copies of the poem, most of them

WRITER vs. ROCKER
A DAY IN THE LIFE

WRITER

8:10 AM Rambling, abusive wake-up call from Saul Bellow.

9:10 AM Think of pseudonym for manuscript of *SSSSSSS II: Snakes in the Grass.*

1 PM Lunch with agent (re: increased advance).

2 PM Lecture to freshman survey course.

3:30 PM Coffee with promising freshman coed.

4 PM Power nap. Re-rumple Harris Tweed.

4:20 PM Rambling, abusive wake-up call from Saul Bellow.

5:20 PM Send angry fax to Camille Paglia.

5:30 PM Call Richard Meltzer, reminding him of deadline for essay on "Heh-heh-heh Heidegger: Dialectical Emblematization in *Beavis and Butt-Head*" for anthology *MT/V: Epistemological Transgression and Music Television*.

5:45 PM Prepare for book signing (re-re-rumple Harris Tweed, empty tumbler of Glennfiddich, gather notes).

6:00 PM Arrive at Crown Superstore for booksigning.

7:30 PM Dinner with André.

11:45 PM Call promising freshman coed re: special tutoring.

12:25 AM Arrive home, check messages (7 rambling, abusive messages from Saul Bellow).

1:35 AM Promising freshman coed arrives. Tutoring begins.

ROCKER

8:10 AM Rambling, abusive wake-up call from Kennedy.

4:20 PM Wake up. Hang up phone.

4:30 PM Roll truncheon-sized doobie.

4:35 PM Eat breakfast (box of Lucky Charms, pack of Lucky Strikes). Watch *Oprah* for inspiration.

5:14 PM Purge breakfast.

5:40 PM *Bewitched* rerun preempted by signing of Bosnian Peace Accord. Throw TV out window into pool.

5:55 PM Happy hour.

6:15 PM Select tattoo that perfectly expresses individuality from old issue of *Highlights*.

6:55 PM Place call to Ethan Hawke re: collaboration on quasi-autobiographical novel *Post-It Notes from the Underground*.

8:15 PM Consent to have likeness used in Bud Dry "The Alternative Beer" ad.

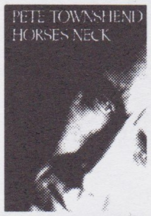
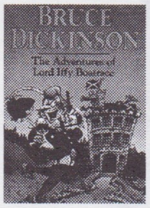
11:35 PM Consult with aspiring journalist re: *Sassy* interview.

12:00 AM Spoken word reading at Nuyorican Poets Cafe.

3:45 AM Last call.

4:05 AM Arrive home, check messages (7 rambling, abusive messages from Kennedy).

4:35 AM Journalist arrives. Interview begins.

ROCK LIT AT A GLANCE	PLOT SUMMARY	LITERARY GENRE	SELF-PROCLAIMED INFLUENCE	ACTUAL INFLUENCE	MOST UNINTENTIONALLY HILARIOUS LINE
 ***HORSE'S NECK* by Pete Townshend Houghton Mifflin 1985 134 pages**	Streetsmart London youth searches for truth and beauty.	Thinly-veiled autobiographical fiction	Colin MacInnes	Quentin Crisp	"The horse is now before me, it bares its teeth and its tongue flicks out. I hold the great, gorgeous head in my hands. Then I walk behind the beautiful creature and, brushing aside the tail, slide deeply into it."
***TARANTULA* by Bob Dylan Macmillan 1971 149 pages**	None	Originally released as "fiction" but rereleased as "poetry"	James Joyce	Publishing advance	"'oh romeo, romeo, wherefor fart thou? pretty good huh?'"
***AND THE ASS SAW THE ANGEL* by Nick Cave Black Spring 1989 248 pages**	Mute, inbred boy born to a dysfunctional family in a mythical cane-growing community somewhere below the Mason-Dixon Line.	Faulknerian lore	The Bible	Roget's Thesaurus	"'*Out!* Fornicatrix! *Begone!* While we still have a mind to let you! Base baggage! Minx! Or is it better we *burn* you out? *Wicked temptator! Witch!* Out—or burn you we shall.'"
***NOW WATCH HIM DIE* By Henry Rollins 2.13.61 1993 187 pages**	Professional entertainer witnesses death of best friend, then has to endure world tours, interviews, adoring fans, and groupies.	Memoirs	Hubert Selby	Andrew Dice Clay	"The heat made me a visionary. I heard the dead of Vietnam scream and I answered them with my own."
***I CAN HEAR ME FINE* by Jean Smith Get to the Point 1993 96 pages**	Telekinetic girl reminisces about her boyfriend, unintentionally sending him spilling through time and space.	Feminist fantasy	Charlotte Perkins Gilman	Judy Blume	"Joelle walks across the parking lot and meows at a small white bag of garbage. She opens the door to her apartment. From the living room she hears, 'I feel like balling.'"
***WHERE IS JOE MERCHANT?* by Jimmy Buffett Harcourt Brace 1992 382 pages**	Dead rock star is spotted again and again around the country, prompting rumors that he isn't dead after all.	Farcical fiction	Ernest Hemingway	Captain Merrill Stubing	"They had taught Brigette, the barmaid, how to make mojitos, and they spent the night yelling 'Fuck Castro!' and singing patriotic songs."
 ***LORD IFFY BOATRACE* by Bruce Dickinson Sidgwick & Jackson 1990 150 pages**	Wacky, transvestite English aristocrat blows his fortune and desperately tries to get it back.	Historical fiction/comedy	Spike Milligan	Benny Hill	"Brian belched and farted simultaneously, rippling the shiny seat of his trousers. 'Where's the old cow anyway?' he demanded."
***FLAN* by Stephen Tunney Four Walls Eight Windows 1992 417 pages**	Young man with talking fish wanders post-apocalyptic landscape in search of his fiancée.	Epic allegory	Gabriel Garcia Marquez	Tom Robbins	"A giant tulip with the penis of a donkey has teeth that chatter the drip-drop of wise men who eat their own brains with large silver spoons. The tulip, on the day of its death, will dance a Hungarian waltz and ejaculate a sun-fold of tiny seeds into the mouth of a loving and hungry rose."

JACKET BLURB	CRITICAL RESPONSE	SEX/DRUGS/ROCK & ROLL?	QUOTE MOST LIKELY TO END UP IN BARTLETT'S
"*Horse's Neck* resembles the integrated compositions of the Who's albums *Tommy* and *Quadrophenia*, a cycle of epiphanies linked by common themes, tones, characters, and rich, telling detail."	"Vague, pretentious…the book is an anomalous idiosyncratic volume held together more by the author's sensibility than conventional narrative strategies." —*New York Times*	"'I've got my Rod Stewart right here,' said the girl. 'Put it on for me.' The song…was about a virgin girl getting her first lay. She was really lucky: her first lay was Rod."	"Given the truth just once, I would hardly know what to do with it."
"*Tarantula* is a work of power, imagination, and fantasy. Filled with word play and fields of humor. *Tarantula* speaks of plain and complicated truths."	" A word-drunk undergraduate… his only tradition the jumbled culture of the war baby." —*New York Times*	"but beneath the underground, Blind Andy Lemon & his friends, Lip, sing rabbit foot blues… theyre standing in a fish bowl & everybody's throwing marbles at them."	"i'm not saying that books are good or bad, but i dont think youve ever had the chance to find out for yourself what theyre all about."
"*And the Ass Saw the Angel* is, quite simply, one of the most extraordinary novels you will ever read."	"Marred by desperate overwriting; it's as if his freshman insecurities and the rigors of touring…prevented him from writing a shorter, more focused novel. Mined with a brain-hemorrhaging vocabulary that further stalls the plot." —*Washington Post*	"Come…upon…me… Jesus. O…Jesus…please… come…upon…me. Boom-boom boom-boom boom-boom boom-boom."	"Ah am one luckless bastard. God Knows. Dumber than a hat full of ear holes."
None	None	"Body Count was in the house."	"I wish there was something on my mind."
"Autographed copy!"	"Smith creates an approximation of a childhood game. The imaginary egg is cracked and the yolk is running slowly down your hair." —*SPIN*	"She swears she didn't put 'I'll Fall To Pieces' on twice in a row on the jukebox."	"I'm an American, I believe anything."
"Once again, Jimmy Buffett cooks up a fictional gumbo of dreamers, wackos, modern-day pirates, and sharks. Welcome to paradise."	"A quick bit of counsel to Buffett: Don't give up your night job." —*Boston Globe*	"He tried to keep time, but the drummer had no rhythm. He recognized the song—a bad rendition of Carlos Santana's 'Black Magic Woman.'"	"'They say God watches over fools, drunks, and children.' 'That's a comforting thought, old buddy. Let's be all three.'"
"Bloody awfully funny."	"It's not going to shake up the philosophical or intellectual communities." —*Washington Post*	"The taxi sat outside, Iron Maiden music blasting out the driver's side window."	"Fuck off, I'm busy, I'm having an orgasm!"
"Drawing on literary traditions that go back to *Don Quixote* and *Candide*, *FLAN* is the story of an innocent abroad in the cruelest of worlds."	"Compelling for all the wrong reasons…so cartoonish that the reader is pushed into disbelief, and worse, indifference." —*San Francisco Chronicle*	"'We're looking at each other, our eyes meet and Elvis sings "I just wanna be your teddy bear" at just the right moment, just like he was reading my mind... such perfect music for love at first sight.'"	"Bozo! Bozo! Bozo! Bozo! Bozo! Bozo!"

folded up into little paper airplanes.

Unfortunately, all that genius was too much for one man to bear and the Lizard King shuffled off this mortal coil before completing his most ambitious spoken word project. That task was left to the three surviving Doors, who, after releasing two wildly unsuccessful albums as a trio and failing to convince Iggy Pop to join a band without a bass player, gathered the few tracks Morrison had completed and set them to music. The resulting album, 1978's *An American Prayer*, not only revived interest in Morrison's oeuvre, it became the checkered flag that started the rock star race towards spoken-word hegemony. For all his Dionysian toil, Morrison was rewarded with burial in Paris' hallowed Pere Lachaise cemetery, the final resting place of Moliere, Proust, and Balzac, thus becoming a role model for every wine-guzzling, skirt-chasing, paean-penciling rock nudist to follow.

DEAF DUMB AND BLIND KID

While Morrison was busy aping the Living Theatre and exploring his inner thespian, the Who's Pete Townshend was hard at work transforming rock into a full-blown spectacle worthy of Rodgers and Hammerstein. The "poet laureate of windmills and guitar smashing," Townshend is credited with creating Rock Lit's bastard cousin, "rock opera," so named because Townshend's 1969 foray *Tommy* grafted the most overblown tendencies of Verdi and Puccini's favorite musical idiom onto the landscape of burnout culture: alienated kids, cartoon adults, and arcade games. Actually, all Townshend had done was rip off the album-as-storytelling concept from the Pretty Things' *S.F. Sorrow*, the first true rock opera, which he has acknowledged listening to for four straight days before writing *Tommy*.

But it was Tommy Walker, the stoned man's Helen Keller, who provided Townshend with his multimedia meal ticket. Lacking even the crude structure of a knock-knock joke, the double-album set was less than a critical or commercial smash, despite extensive Bally product placement, but after the Who performed it live at venues like New York's Metropolitan Opera House, *Tommy* began to take on a life of its own, gracing stages from the Royal Albert Hall to East St. Louis Vocational High. In 1975, like *Showboat*, *Oklahoma*, and *South Pacific* before it, *Tommy* was made into a film, and in 1993 Townshend finally brought it to Broadway, where its bombast fit in perfectly on the Great White Way. Although many of these adaptations resulted in further double album sets, none of them made any more narrative sense than the original. With more revivals than *Friday the 13th* (including an unconscionable all-ska version by the LA band Ye Olde English called *Tommy: A Rock-Steady Opera* starring '70s Doritos pitchman Avery Schreiber), *Tommy* had finally achieved canonical status by sheer repetition alone.

Unlike other Rock Lit dilettantes, Townshend managed to turn his side pursuit into a respectable day job. After running a bookstore (Magic Bus) and a publishing company (Eel Pie), in 1983 Townshend became a commissioning editor at prestigious Faber & Faber, the home of T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, and Milan Kundera. Townshend quickly seized this opportunity to publish his own book of quasi-autobiographical fiction, *Horse's Neck*. Drunk on his newfound credentials, he renounced conventional rock songs. "The form's so minimal," he told an interviewer, "as confining as the sonnet. It's just a rhythmic, mnemonic setting." Thus his 1985 concept album and video *White City* was subtitled "A Novel," a time-saving move that beat having to sit down and actually write all those pages.

Still prolific well into middle age, Townshend has continued to thrive as the rock figure most likely to turn up on PBS, churning out self-consciously cerebral works like 1989's *Iron Man*—unfortunately not an Ozzy tribute but an operatic adaptation of a children's book by English poet laureate Ted Hughes—and 1993's *PsychoDerelict*, a "musical play" about playing music. He may have lost his hearing, but he hasn't lost his funding, so we can expect more of Pete's quality workmanship for years to come.

> **"I found poetry readings really boring all along, but poetry is losing its stigma by switching to 'spoken word,' which is some kind of cross between comedy and therapy."**
> ***—Richard Hell, who has a spoken word album forthcoming on T/K Records***

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

By 1967 the Beatles, emboldened by their press clips, had traded in their "yeah, yeah, yeahs" for "*tres bien ensembles*," transforming themselves from cuddly mop-tops into mustachioed, psychedelic bellhops. With *Sgt. Pepper's,* they even started printing their lyrics on their album sleeves, allowing rock consumers to feel like Book of the Month Club members simply by purchasing their records. Verbose lyric sheets became as commonplace as muttonchops and elephant bells; where once gatefolds were useful only for deseeding weed, now they were required reading.

At the same time, quick-witted groups discovered that while reading is fundamental, name-dropping is even easier. Bands raided the library for moniker inspiration (Steppenwolf, Mott the Hoople, Supertramp, Genesis), occasionally even going so far as to open a book for lyrical inspiration (the Beatles' "Golden Slumbers" was based on a 16th century poem, while Jefferson Airplane cribbed Lewis Carroll on "White Rabbit"), proving that despite their chosen vocation, rockers could actually read more than the proof label on a liquor bottle.

Following in the footsteps of the four giants of Rock Lit's Mount Rushmore, musicians adopted the mantra of the Age of Antiquarius—"tune in, turn on, write verse"—and moved from infringing on the literary copyrights of others to actually writing themselves. English elf Marc Bolan of T. Rex published *Warlock of Love*, a book of druid poems. Texas thorazine casualty Roky Erickson offered the poetry collection *Openers*. Jimi Hendrix, "the poet laureate of choking on your own puke," took breaks from practicing his "I'm jammin'" overbite in the mirror to compose poesy on hotel stationery; the results were eventually published posthumously in 1993's *Cherokee Fire*, where the man best remembered for making the "Star Spangled Banner" suitable for use in beer commercials left behind such couplets as "Rudy doo-dupee dee/Hip hip horray [sic] for LSD" and "I'm sitting on a button sipping on a hot cup of soap/And I whisper to you/Please pass the cheese." Perhaps his headband was just on too tight.

In 1972, the British space-cadet/biker boogie group Hawkwind added to their lineup the poet Bob Calvert, who portentously intoned astronomical observations like "Space!/Space is väst/Space is deep" between Lemmy's chugging basslines; the band later allied with sci-fi writer Michael Moorcock, who used the group as the subject of his 1976 novel *In the Time of the Hawklords*. The marriage of heavy metal and science fiction (both of the futuristic outer space and primeval inner earth varieties) was one of the many unions between different genres of music and specialized reading lists. Such connections legitimized both mediums: the rock crowd gained some coveted intellectual props, while the book scene partook of rock's hip cachet. Eventually, such networking would lead to the symbiotic relationships between hip-hop and black nationalist lit, pigfuck and true crime, and Liz Phair and Erica Jong.

THE FENDER IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

With the explosion of Rock Lit, rock poets replaced real poets as the paragons of literary hepness; fulltime writers were dispatched to Squaresville, with Kerouac and the beats taking a back seat to Lennon, Dylan, Morrison, et al. The genre proliferated with such abandon that, in turn, many already established authors contemplated adding rock to their resumes. It's not hard to understand why rockers would write books—girls might not make passes at boys who wear glasses, but they certainly jump at frontmen who quote Shelley (Percy Bysshe, not Pete)—and writers who want to rock are similarly motivated. For one thing, the women backstage at a rock concert are usually more alluring than those backstage at the MLA convention; for another, there is no backstage at the MLA convention.

Leonard Cohen was already the acclaimed author of four books of poetry and two novels before he ever picked up an acoustic guitar and started clearing his throat, realizing that continuing on as a poet—and a Canadian poet no less—would offer him very few chances to rendezvous with Janis Joplin in the Chelsea

Hotel. (Perhaps Cohen could already see Rebecca DeMornay in his future, even though she was only a toddler at the time.) Poets Ed Sanders, Tuli Kupferberg, and Ken Weaver formed the Fugs in 1965 as an excuse to sing about boobs and rivers of shit, taking their name from Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*; on their debut album they "covered" William Blake, Algernon Swinburne, and Allen Ginsberg, although one rock encyclopedia remembers them primarily for having "made offensiveness a fashionable and acceptable commodity." English major Lou Reed studied poetry at Syracuse, where he became a disciple of poet Delmore Schwartz, to whom he later dedicated the song "European Son." After school, Reed published his poems in *Fusion* magazine and read them at New York's St. Mark's Church, but waiting for Godot paled in comparison to waiting for the man, so he formed the Velvet Underground, where he could commit collegiate compositions like "The Gift" to vinyl and influence generations of East Village idiots.

But by far the most hirsute of all of these authors turned musicians was Patti Smith. In 1971 Smith wrote the play *Cowboy Mouth* with Holy Modal Rounders drummer Sam Shepard ("I don't want to be a playwright, I want to be a rock and roll star," wrote Shepard, "I got into writing plays because I had nothing else to do"), and had her poetry published in *Creem*, which led to her first verse collections, *Seventh Heaven* and *Witt*. Growing tired of merely providing lyrics for her boyfriend Allen Lanier's band Blue Oyster Cult, she moved from writing odes to Jim Morrison ("our leather lamb. he feared/the bathroom" she penned in "Death by Water") to letting it all hang out just like him.

Despite her best efforts at attention-getting, Smith's greatest notoriety came from Gilda Radner's impersonation on *Saturday Night Live* (complete with Hasidic beards of armpit hair), while her biggest hit was penned by Bruce Springsteen. Although she retired from the active rock lifestyle prematurely, after an exhaustive search to find a husband with the same last name as her own (Smith, Fred "Sonic"), Smith made an indelible impact as Rock Lit's first feminist figure, the mother of all riot wrrriting. By inspiring thousands of pre-menstrual poetesses to commit their sassy sestinas to paper, Smith ensured that Rock Lit would become an equal opportunity employer, allowing women to cash in on their library cards just like the boys.

After Smith's splash, other spotlight-hungry scribes followed suit. Delaware dreamer Tom Miller leafed through a book of French symbolist poetry and became "Tom Verlaine," while Kentucky kid Lester Meyers picked up a copy of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and became "Richard Hell"; the two of them published the book of poems *Wanna Go Out?* together under another pseudonym, "Theresa Stern," before they became Neon Boys and TV junkies. In the early '80s diary revisionist Jim Carroll figured he would have better luck copping if he were known as a real rock singer and not just the whiny kid asking for a drink on the Velvet Underground's *Live at Max's Kansas City*; Carroll formed his own band and eventually scored an appearance on ABC's *Fridays* performing "People Who Died."

Soon to join that list was rock critic Lester Bangs, who so emulated the rock ethos that he cut two albums with substandard backing groups the Delinquents and Birdland before losing a fatal game of Mr. Pharmacist. Even beat daddy-o Allen Ginsberg joined in the fun, recording several collaborations with Bob Dylan in 1971 (unreleased until Rhino's 1994 collection *Holy Soul Jelly Roll*) and performing on Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue. None the wiser, Ginsberg later tried again, howling along with the Clash on *Combat Rock*, foreshadowing the dysfunctional marriage between punks and poems that would soon be consummated.

RIMBAUD: FIRST BLOOD

As Rock Lit blossomed through the '70s and into the '80s, it continued to sweep up the unlikeliest performers in its gaping maw. While Bruce Springsteen based "Darkness on the Edge of Town" on John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, Rush was adapting Ayn Rand's themes into *2112*, and Led Zeppelin was deconstructing Herman Melville on "Moby Dick." Thin Lizzy's Phil Lynott offered a book of verse, honky-tonk Heeb Kinky Friedman became a mystery writer, and Mick Farren of the Deviants turned his attention to sci-fi novels like his *Phaid the Gambler* series. Bands like the Birthday Party, the Fall, and Eyeless in Gaza all advertised their ownership of a little Pinter, Camus, and Huxley, while Alfred-Jarry-fan-turned-Pere-Ubu-guitarist Peter Laughner penned odes to both "Baudelaire" and "Sylvia Plath" before he more or less emulated the latter.

But punk rock soon became the music industry's greatest provider of publishing jobs. Punk's do-it-yourself approach meant everybody was a wordsmith: as long as you could bench-press a ballpoint, you were worthy of publication. However, such a populist notion ignored the fact that the DIY aesthetic was patently absurd when applied to literature: while punk musicians proved that they didn't need conventional talent to string together the chords E, A, and G, such accomplishments were hardly a license to start writing with the rhyme pattern ABABAA.

Fueled by punk's go-get-'em spirit, funny-haired upstarts took to scrawling on tablets like pensioners to Palm Springs. Traditionally, British rock bands met at art school; John Doe and Exene Cervenka of X met at a poetry workshop. Cervenka published her first collection *Adulterers Anonymous* in 1982, a collaboration with Lydia Lunch. Since then Cervenka has cemented her reputation as the "poet laureate of Depression-era dresses" with the painstakingly hand-doodled *Virtual Unreality*, while self-proclaimed "confrontationalist" Lunch has weighed in with the "Best of" collection *Incriminating Evidence*. ("THE NEED TO DOCUMENT MY PERSONAL INSANITY IS AN AFFLICTION I HAVEN'T YET CURED MYSELF OF," writes Lunch in her

The Wit & Wisdom of ROLLINS

ON ROLLINS

"I have the intellect of a shark and that's good."

"Whoever said that shit about no man is an island has never met me."

"I am the Hollow Man."

ON HIS FRIENDS

Iggy Pop: "He's so cool."

King Sunny Ade: "I spoke to him briefly. Made my day."

Dave Navarro: "A great guy, good to see him again."

Steve Albini: "He'll never know how close he came to getting his face fucked up in front of his friends."

ON TOURING

"A gig is a gig."

"The further we go the worse it gets."

ON PLACES HE'S PLAYED

Sheffield, England: "Fucked up buildings."

Florence, Italy: "Shit doesn't work."

ON HIS CONTEMPORARIES

U2: "I hate that band."

Da Lench Mob: "They suck flat out."

Madonna: "She makes me want to drink beer."

Red Hot Chili Peppers: "I like those guys ok."

ON WOMEN

"Every time I masturbate instead of touching a woman I do a good thing for myself."

ON HIS FANS

"Fuck these people. Take them out and shoot them."

"I'd rather have their money than their affection."

"I don't feel anything for these people."

"They aren't individuals to me."

"I don't want to know about their drunk pathetic lives."

"I can't deal with these people."

"Sometimes I hate them."

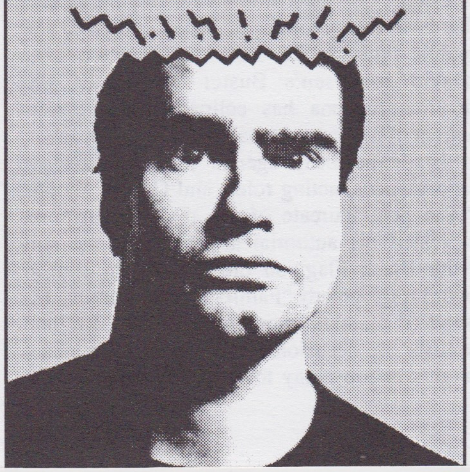


PHOTO BY RICK McGINNIS

author's note.) The Sam Kinison of the Hate Generation, Lunch and her uppercased, one-note melodrama may have seemed "transgressive" in another era—say, Victorian England—but in the age of Oprah and Sally Jessie, her infantile tantrums are downright pedestrian. Now that Courtney Love has displaced her as today's sound of fingernails-against-a-chalkboard, Lydia has nothing to do but lunch.

British singer, painter, and early Kinks enthusiast Billy Childish hasn't let a little thing like dyslexia stand in the way of a prolific publishing career, setting over 30 different books of his misspelled musings to print ("its good when the shits hared/n you dont need paper/its good when the moving is just rite n dont stop"), most on his own publishing imprint Hangman. Suicide vocalist Alan Vega had his work anthologized in *Cripple Nation* ("Deadman/That fuckin' bum/Is dead/Fuckin' deal it/Asshole"), while former Saccharine Trust singer Jack Brewer published a collection of poems, *No Lunch*, which proved that he was no more successful at "verse" than he was at "jazz." ("Try to write an original poem," begins his "Note to Myself.") Brewer would have better served both himself and his audience by sticking with his real talent: pulling his foreskin over his glans, pinching it tight, and filling it with urine so that it inflates like a balloon.

Then there's former Birthday Party pooper Nick Cave, who likes to write about places where the only thing folks do with books is burn them. Although Cave had never travelled below the Mason-Dixon Line before writing his novel *And the Ass Saw the Angel*, this bonafide Confederate dunce spent 250 pages meticulously painting the Southern landscape outhouse by outhouse, sounding less like Flannery O'Connor than Hazel O'Connor. Jolly St. Nick has a knack for overwrought and anachronistic verbiage, but why say in a word what you can euphemize into a paragraph? "Well, then the day returned," he wrote in *Ass*. "An erumpent sun bellowed shouts of buttery light over the eastern flank, waking the entire valley with its aureate noise"—in other words, the sun came up. Elsewhere, punk's Algonquin Round Table includes Chris D, John Doe, Dave Alvin, Eugene Chadbourne, Jean Smith of Mecca Normal, Stephen Tunney of Dogbowl, Jim Shepard of V3, Mark Mothersbaugh, Lee Ranaldo, and Julian Cope, all of whom have at least one book title under their studded belts.

NOW WATCH HIM WRITE

But the true giant among contemporary punk bards is Henry Garfield, better known to the public through his "Rollins" character. Like David Johansen's Buster Poindexter, the Rollins persona has eclipsed the previous career of his creator to take on a life of his own, a hectic celebrity agenda full of talk-show appearances, acting roles, and Gap ad shoots. "The poet laureate of the pit," Rollins first revealed his authorial aspirations while still with Black Flag, on the side-length spoken word tragicomedy "Family Man." Initially, this kind of dramatic monologue offered Rollins' tonsils an occasional break after too many nights in too many towns screaming through too many bad PAs. But just as surely as pot leads to heroin, the spoken word pieces evolved into full-length manuscripts, as Rollins became as addicted to his newfound writerly pursuits as he was to drinking black coffee and staring at the wall.

Some people have to wash their hands every five minutes; Rollins has to publish a book. Evidently suffering from grapholalia, the obsessive-compulsive need to write, Rollins formed his own publishing house, 2.13.61—helpfully providing his birthday for future archivists and biographers. Not only doesn't he feel the need to revise, he doesn't feel the need to edit, publishing every single line he's committed to paper. Grocery lists, diary entries, personal letters to Nick Cave and Lydia Lunch—they all just end up as another installment in his drive-by autobiography. Most writers' half-formed, unfinished works only see print after their death; evidently Rollins is determined to ensure that no one will make a dime off him after he's gone.

> **"What is a modern poet's fate? To write his thoughts upon a slate; The critic spits on what is done, Gives it a wipe—and all is gone."**
> **—*Thomas Hood***

To be fair, Rollins does possess the best tattoos in poetry; he also looks bitchin' in Speedos. Aside from these attributes, however, he is little more than a bitter bohemian Fabio. Concerned almost exclusively with his favorite subject—himself—Rollins' sorry short stories and even worse verse read more like Barney Miller than Henry Miller. Assigned to write a profile on Juliana Hatfield for a weekly entertainment mag, Rollins reportedly submitted at least two drafts, but after numerous attempts at rewriting the editors decided the piece was unsalvageable, telling Hatfield's people, "He just can't write." The enterprise wasn't a complete bust, however: Rollins reportedly managed to hit it off quite well with his subject. They don't call him Hammerin' Hank for nothing.

When he's not taking time out from his gig as the David Brenner of *120 Minutes*, Rollins is on the road. "I am not on tour/I am tour/Fierce," he writes in *One From None*. Ceaselessly crisscrossing the country, Rollins' spoken word tours give new meaning to the term "poetry slam," as he spreads his grassroots rage directly to the people. Although his stand-up routine boldly challenges hallowed comic conventions—for instance, timing, delivery, and punchlines—Henry's move into the spoken-word arena has unfortunately shown that he's learned nothing from the dignified silence of his cartoon namesake.

E=MTV²

Of course, the spoken-word universe doesn't end with Rollins. Feeding off the legitimate innovations of the Last Poets, jazz poetry, and hip-hop, the nascent genre has become the missing link—a countercultural Piltdown Man—between stand-up comedy and off-off Broadway theater. Although most people with discriminating tastes view poetry readings as the equivalent of vacation slideshows, spoken-word performances and poetry slams have drawn conspicuously bountiful crowds and extensive media coverage across the country. Then again, on the positive side these spectacles—like tractor pulls or large sporting events—take undesirable elements off the streets so decent citizens can conduct their affairs in peace.

Spoken word is this year's lambada, and the bookfree boom has offered poets a rare opportunity to cash in. Though he titled his spoken-word album *Please Don't Take My Air Jordans*, Reg E. Gaines eagerly traded in his trademark footwear to shill for Flak Tech sneakers, while Max Blagg rhapsodized for the Gap and William Burroughs spoke in riddles for Nike, even though to most Americans he looks like just another quirky senior in the tradition of Clara Peller and Larry Bud Melman.

Ever since Thomas Edison mumbled "Mary Had a Little Lamb" into his newly invented foil cylinder, people have been fascinated by the recorded sound of their own voices. From the early Library of Congress documents of famous half-dead authors feebly reading their most passionate works to the present glut of infamous half-baked performers passionately reading their feeblest works, spoken word has enjoyed a special place in the annals of recorded sound, usually right next to the comedy section. In addition to Rollins, Jello Biafra—the dumb man's Lenny Bruce—has offered *I Blow Dogs for a Living* and the three CD *Beyond the Valley of the Gift Police*, while Lunch spews *The Uncensored Lydia Lunch* and *Oral Fixation*. Filling in for Rollins as host of *120 Minutes*, Thurston Moore proudly showed a murky clip of himself giving a dramatic reading of the back cover of an old hardcore compilation, while Kim Gordon read from the instructions to a guitar "Grunge Pedal." Even Scott Richardson, of late '60s Detroit bill-padders SRC, has fashioned his own spoken album, *Tornado Souvenirs*, backed by B-horror film idol Ron Asheton, Morrison pimp Ray Manzarek, and old-school weed freak Robert Mitchum.

Seeking to capitalize on this hottest of talk-centered trends, several labels have formed their own spoken-word divisions. Lollapalooza replaced the Jim Rose Circus Sideshow with the Rev. Samuel Mudd Spoken Word Tent, where mutilation of the body was supplanted by the far more grisly mutilation of the English language. Not satisfied with pumping spoken word via their Nuyorican spots, MTV has continued versifying the airwaves through the young people on *The Real World*. The first season's cast included candelabra-hurling spoken-word veteran Kevin Powell, while the third year's less-seasoned San

Francisco crew used their own poems to settle a roommate dispute, culminating in dateless dullard Judd's Hallmark-card-worthy "Fishbowl." ("I've seen a big ol' fishbowl/Full of different fish/They talk, they fight, they laugh, they cry/But they never clean a dish.") Despite all the hullabaloo, however, not all these success stories have happy endings: performing her randy rants at Woodstock '94, Maggie Estep was showered with Evian bottles and Ben and Jerry's containers, while at a gig in Berkeley, Biafra got stomped into a body cast by unappreciative pundits.

BA, BA, BA, BA-BAUDELAIRE

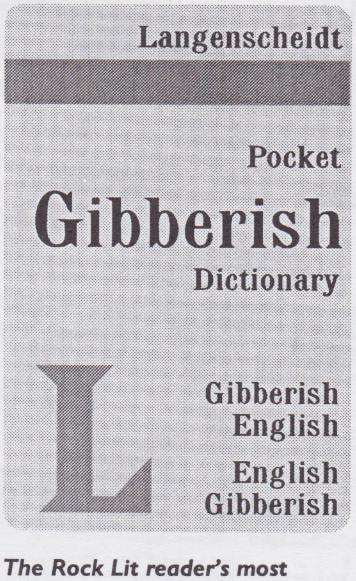
Celebrating its 30th anniversary, Rock Lit has grown beyond a small, isolated phenomenon into an entertainment industry goldmine and a quasi-legitimate genre. *Wilderness,* a collection of Jim Morrison's "lost writings," sold over 250,000 copies, while a second collection, *The American Night*, had a first printing of 95,000 copies, far exceeding the standard publishing run of 5,000 to 7,500. One associate professor of medieval literature at Yale has called Morrison "the major poet of the last quarter of the 20th century." Duke University Press published professor Wallace Fowlie's study, *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: The Rebel as Poet*, and Morrison's work is frequently included on syllabi at colleges nationwide, including Stanford, Duke, and Yale.

Unlike rock itself, Rock Lit is thriving, and the end is nowhere in sight. Reading list shout-outs remain as prevalent as drug overdoses: from the Grifters to the Boo Radleys, from Veruca Salt to Lisa Loeb's Nine Stories, the list of contemporary performers who've swiped their names from books is endless. Even the Stone Temple Pilots' Weiland, the Rich Little of grunge, borrowed his stage name from Charles Brockden Brown's 1798 novel *Wieland; or the Transformation.*

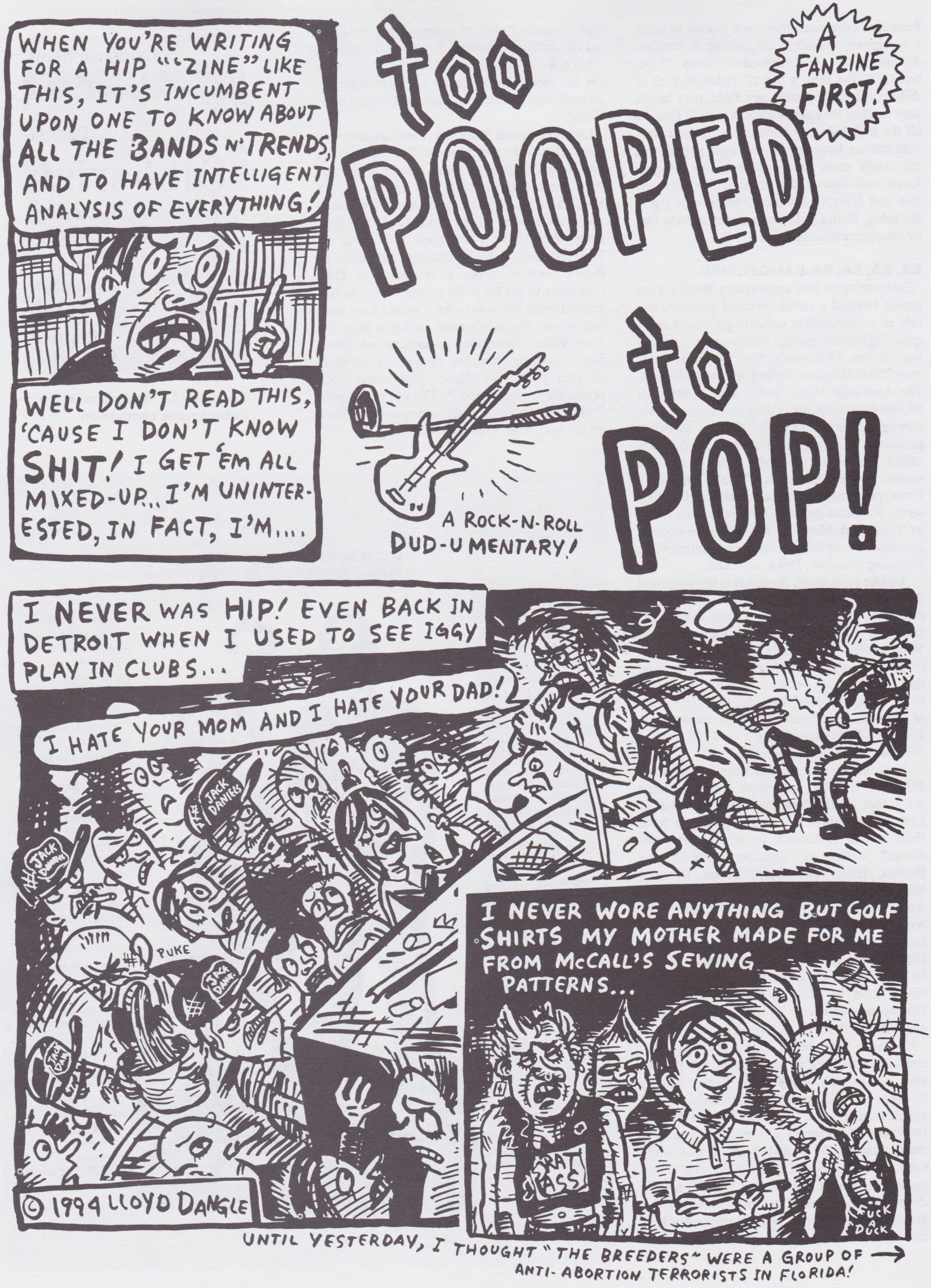
Rock authors, no longer satisfied with the Billboard Top 200, now have reason to hope for a spot on the *New York Times* Bestseller List. Among those currently aiming to have their books reshelved from the "Popular Music" section to "Literature" are Jimmy Buffett, Bruce Dickinson, Bruce Thomas, Michael Hurley, Mark Almond, and Laurie Anderson. Ultimately, no matter how these writers wish to be remembered, they're all bound to be remaindered. To paraphrase Hammer, it's all bad. Gutenberg himself would be cursing his own invention if he weren't worm food by now; if there's any justice, Greenpeace will soon be trying these authors and publishers for crimes against trees.

Not that a return to the Dark Ages is in order, but a little restraint would be nice. It's pretension, not literacy, that's really Public Enemy Numero Uno. Despite the commonly applied appellation "classic," rock has little to do with the canon of Western Civilization (aside from owing much to the contributions of dead white men with ringlets of curly hair who could match the Greeks and Romans note for note in debauchery); rock is a business where "epic" is associated with Sony, not Homer. Rock is dumb, and that's just fine. To attempt to raise rock to some "higher" artistic level denies it the cultural importance it already has. Besides, what else are you supposed to grind along to in the backseat of your father's Oldsmobile, the Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos?

Literature is one thing and music another, and never the twain should meet. People in many God-forsaken foreign lands prefer rock, and they can't understand a lick of the King's English, a little fact which speaks volumes about the role of words in music. When Iggy sang "We'll have a real cool time" over the Stooges' din, it was perfectly eloquent; he didn't need to make a reference to D.H. Lawrence to get his point across, and if he had printed those lyrics as haiku it would have been ridiculous. You don't need an MFA from the Iowa Writers Workshop to understand where rock is coming from: the answer is right there in your pants. So please, prospective rock poets, playwrights, and Ph.Ds: put down your Parkers, pack up your Olivettis, and get back on the mic. Your ISBN number is up. ■



The Rock Lit reader's most indispensable companion

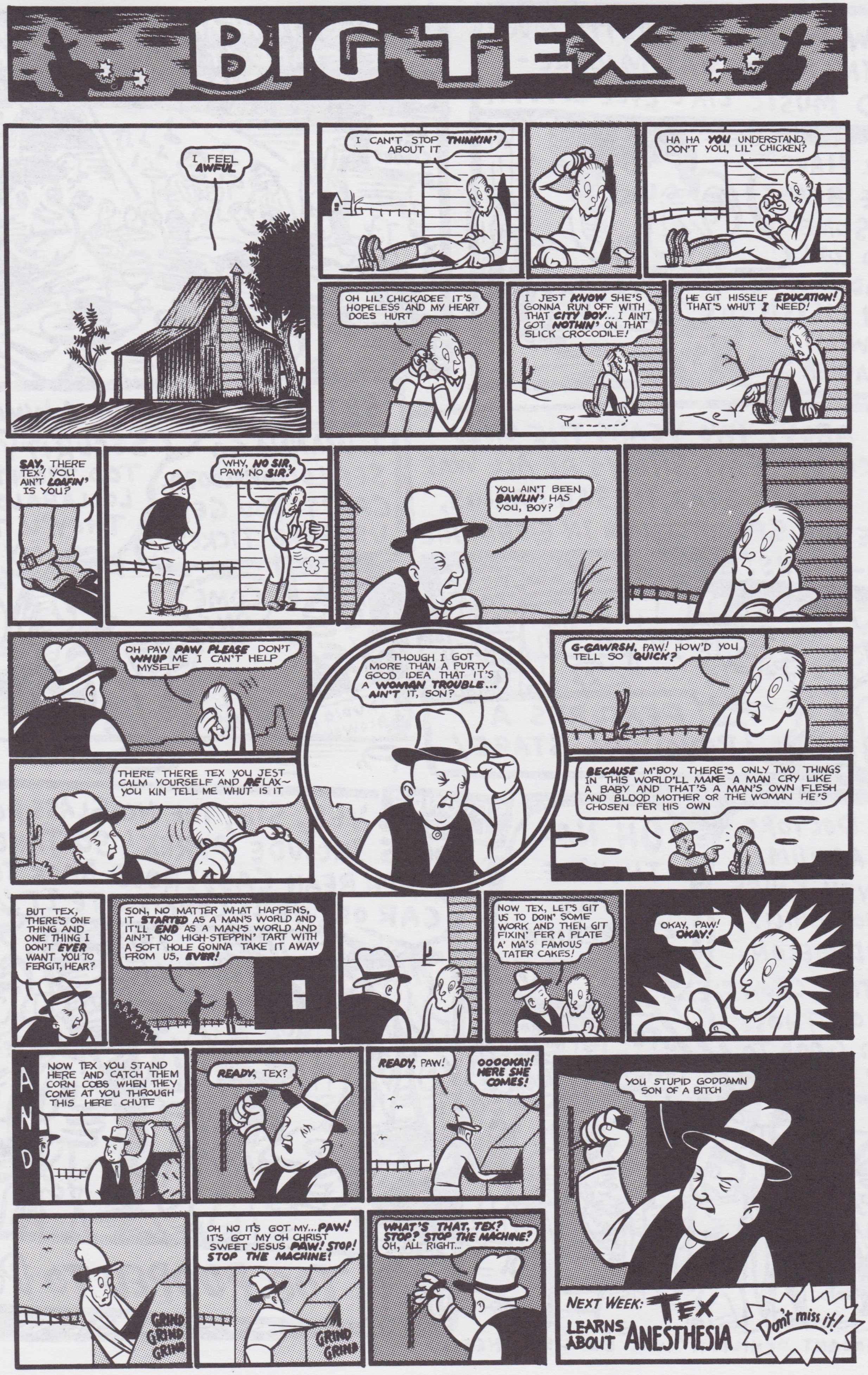


WHEN YOU'RE WRITING FOR A HIP ""ZINE"" LIKE THIS, IT'S INCUMBENT UPON ONE TO KNOW ABOUT ALL THE BANDS N' TRENDS, AND TO HAVE INTELLIGENT ANALYSIS OF EVERYTHING!
too POOPED to POP!
A FANZINE FIRST!
WELL DON'T READ THIS, 'CAUSE I DON'T KNOW SHIT! I GET 'EM ALL MIXED-UP.. I'M UNINTERESTED, IN FACT, I'M....
A ROCK-N-ROLL DUD-U MENTARY!
I NEVER WAS HIP! EVEN BACK IN DETROIT WHEN I USED TO SEE IGGY PLAY IN CLUBS...
I HATE YOUR MOM AND I HATE YOUR DAD!
JACK DANIELS
PUKE
I NEVER WORE ANYTHING BUT GOLF SHIRTS MY MOTHER MADE FOR ME FROM McCALL'S SEWING PATTERNS...
FUCK A DUCK
© 1994 LLOYD DANGLE
UNTIL YESTERDAY, I THOUGHT "THE BREEDERS" WERE A GROUP OF ANTI-ABORTION TERRORISTS IN FLORIDA! →

YOU MEAN TO TELL ME "GREEN DAY" ISN'T ENVIRONMENTALLY SAFE DETERGENT?

I STILL THINK OF "ROLLING STONE" AS BEING A VERY CUTTING-EDGE MAGAZINE!

NOW WE STICK PRETTY MUCH TO INTELLECTUAL MIDDLE-AGED MUSIC LIKE LYLE LOVETT.
WE'LL HAVE SOME BEANS AND SOME GOOD CORN BREAD. NOW LISTEN TO WHAT THE PREACHER SAID.
OR WE GO TO HEAR JAZZ WE DON'T UNDERSTAND AT CLUBS THAT SERVE SUSHI AND CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE.
DO NOT SMOKE
NO SMOKIN
FOR ABOUT TWO YEARS THE ONLY PLACE WE SAW SHOWS AT ALL WAS THE CIRCLE STAR, IN SAN CARLOS, A VENUE SPECIALIZING IN GERIATRIC HAS-BEENS!
CIRCLE STAR
TONIGHT TOM JONES
GEORGE JONES
FEATURES A REVOLVING STAGE!
BUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE...
I WANNA GO SEE LOLLAPALOOZA. CAN'T YOU GET US FREE TICKETS?
SECURITY'S TOO TIGHT AT LOLLAPALOOZA. THEY'LL TAKE MY STASH!
COME ON!
OH, OKAY.
STUFF
SPIN DOCTORS, SOUL ASYLUM, SHONEN KNIFE, RED HOT CHILIS, BLIND MELON, COUNTING CROWS; ANY OF THOSE SOUND GOOD TO YOU?
OH NO! THEY'RE REALLY SEARCHING DILIGENTLY!
STOP SEARCH POINT
NO BOTTLES NO CAMERA
SECONDS LATER:
YES, SIR, THE NO-GLASS POLICY DOES INCLUDE PYREX! SO TAKE THE GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE BACK TO YOUR CAR OR WE'LL CONFISCATE IT!
SECURIT
TOO POOPED TO POP!
I THOUGHT "CHILTON" WAS ENGLISH CHEESE!


BIG TEX
I FEEL AWFUL.
I CAN'T STOP THINKIN' ABOUT IT
HA HA YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, LIL' CHICKEN?
OH LIL' CHICKADEE IT'S HOPELESS AND MY HEART DOES HURT
I JEST KNOW SHE'S GONNA RUN OFF WITH THAT CITY BOY... I AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' ON THAT SLICK CROCODILE!
HE GIT HISSELF EDUCATION! THAT'S WHUT I NEED!
SAY, THERE TEX? YOU AIN'T LOAFIN' IS YOU?
WHY, NO SIR, PAW, NO SIR.
YOU AIN'T BEEN BAWLIN' HAS YOU, BOY?
OH PAW PAW PLEASE DON'T WHUP ME I CAN'T HELP MYSELF
THERE THERE TEX YOU JEST CALM YOURSELF AND RE-LAX~ YOU KIN TELL ME WHUT IS IT
THOUGH I GOT MORE THAN A PURTY GOOD IDEA THAT IT'S A WOMAN TROUBLE... AIN'T IT, SON?
G-GAWRSH, PAW! HOW'D YOU TELL SO QUICK?
BECAUSE M'BOY THERE'S ONLY TWO THINGS IN THIS WORLD'LL MAKE A MAN CRY LIKE A BABY AND THAT'S A MAN'S OWN FLESH AND BLOOD MOTHER OR THE WOMAN HE'S CHOSEN FER HIS OWN
BUT TEX, THERE'S ONE THING AND ONE THING I DON'T EVER WANT YOU TO FERGIT, HEAR?
SON, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, IT STARTED AS A MAN'S WORLD AND IT'LL END AS A MAN'S WORLD AND AIN'T NO HIGH-STEPPIN' TART WITH A SOFT HOLE GONNA TAKE IT AWAY FROM US, EVER!
NOW TEX, LET'S GIT US TO DOIN' SOME WORK AND THEN GIT FIXIN' FER A PLATE A' MA'S FAMOUS TATER CAKES!
OKAY, PAW! OKAY!
AND
NOW TEX YOU STAND HERE AND CATCH THEM CORN COBS WHEN THEY COME AT YOU THROUGH THIS HERE CHUTE
READY, TEX?
READY, PAW!
OOOOKAY! HERE SHE COMES!
GRIND GRIND GRIND
OH NO IT'S GOT MY... PAW! IT'S GOT MY OH CHRIST SWEET JESUS PAW! STOP! STOP THE MACHINE!
GRIND GRIND
WHAT'S THAT, TEX? STOP? STOP THE MACHINE? OH, ALL RIGHT...
YOU STUPID GODDAMN SON OF A BITCH
NEXT WEEK: TEX LEARNS ABOUT ANESTHESIA
Don't miss it!

The Magnificent Seven

THE NEW ROCK'S 7 Hottest Franchisors

According to popular myth, members of the "twentysomething" generation are lazy and non-committal, unwilling to do their laundry let alone plunge into the practical world of business. However, we at MOTORBOOTY have found that beneath this convincing facade of disengagement lurks a fierce entrepreneurial spirit. It turns out that the most renowned purveyors of this generation's music, as well as a few of their most visionary forebears, have harnessed market forces in a most innovative fashion by actually franchising the very sounds and styles that made them so unique.

These musical mavericks blazed new trails in intellectual property law by securing patent and copyright protection for their low-fi hijinks, crazy get-ups and anti-social attitudes. Then, armed with the templates of their musical revolution, these savvy style makers began licensing their sounds to promising newcomers.

"Most franchisors tend to view potential franchisees as a medium to long-term investment," says alternative market analyst Darryl Licht. "They want an outfit that faithfully reproduces the core original sound and manners, yet adds a few quirks and eventually finds a market niche of their own."

Because franchisees use their own trade names, many consumers of alternative music products are not aware of the intricate licensing structures that support the scene. But this fact doesn't make the arrangements any less effective. "Consumers still get the primary benefits of the franchise relationship," Licht observes. "Namely, the assurance that most any product out there, whether it has origins in Chapel Hill or San Diego, will fit into the familiar categories and patterns that customers demand and deserve."

What's ahead for this innovative market trend? Only time will tell, but over-the-counter brokerage houses are already clamoring for a piece of the action. "In the future, we'll see some of the successful franchisors making their intellectual property rights more fungible," says Licht. "If an outfit needed to raise some fast capital to develop a promising new franchisee, I think there'd be a strong market for stock in the original sound. The franchisor could simultaneously retain its treasured 'artistic control' and secure sufficient cash flow to keep its officers in tattered cardigans and high-end pharmaceuticals well into the 21st century."

For the time being, however, this hot crop of entrepreneurs is doing just fine. As the following profiles reveal, they're "slacking" all the way to the bank.

Any product will fit into the familiar categories

1 SONIC YOUTH

"Well, 'kingmaker' is a bit strong," concedes Sonic Youth president Thurston Moore, "but I guess an okey-doke from me has been known to open some doors for a fledgling rock band or two, even if they're not an official Sonic Youth franchise." It's hard to argue with that opinion, as these decidedly sonic, if no longer youthful moguls ("We are getting a little long in the tooth," admits executive vice-president Kim Gordon) sit atop the largest musical empire of any existing alternative band.

"It wasn't very hard to put the patent applications together," explains Moore. "The formula is really quite simple: pure, pulsing dissonance, courtesy of those unorthodox guitar treatments, coupled with evocative lyrics that leave plenty to the imagination." Once the band secured protection for its trademark "wall of noise," it was free to increase its share of more tuneful and traditional markets.

Thurston Moore

Sonic Youth soon found conventional corporate structures as limiting as standard tunings. To consolidate their considerable British holdings, the band established an offshore subsidiary, My Bloody Valentine (MBV). Displaying a Thatcherite entrepreneurial spirit, MBV was charged with overseeing the operations of franchisees like Curve, Verve, Blur, Ride, Slowdive and Swervedriver.

This left Sonic Youth free to devote its full attention to North American operations. "On this side of the pond, franchisees tend to be a little less well…British," Moore observes. Indeed, organizations like Polvo, Band of Susans, Pitchblende, and Eric's Trip draw more heavily from the Youth's earlier, noisier repertoire.

"Now that we have a little dependent in the organization," says Moore "some operational changes may be in order. I don't want to let the cat out of the bag, but there'll be pennies from heaven if we decide to go public."

2 MINOR THREAT

"Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," says Minor Threat founder and leading light Ian MacKaye, "and I've always placed a high premium on sincerity."

With blitz-speed tempos, stridently puritanical lyrics, and a peculiar penchant for skateboarding, Minor Threat pioneered the musical subgenre known as "hardcore." With heads shaved and jackboots scuffed, they took a strong stand against the prevailing youth culture of hedonism and conformity. Inspired by this individualistic message, scores of rebellious young bands emerged, each painstakingly reproducing the Minor Threat sound and ethos.

MacKaye saw the opportunity for rapid market expansion. Once he had established Dischord Records to release music by Minor Threat and subsidiary bands from the Washington, D.C., area, he then helped set up satellite hardcore "scenes" in other cities across America and eventually, the world. Before he could say "12XU," MacKaye had emerged as the Ray Kroc of hardcore.

"I run a tight ship," MacKaye says matter-of-factly, "otherwise, I'd never be able to keep track of all of my franchisees. Reagan Youth, Wasted Youth, Youth of Today—the names of these outfits are as confusing as the names of the subdivisions that they sprang from."

While by its very nature hardcore seemed like a movement with the lifespan of a housefly, MacKaye's holdings have continued to prosper. "Frankly I'm stunned by the legs this hardcore thing has had," MacKaye admits. "No sooner does one franchise fold than another comes to take its place."

Ian MacKaye

MacKaye is right. While he may have lost Youth Patrol, he now has Seaweed, the Offspring, and Penny-wise, and even though Minor Threat itself is no more, MacKaye still maintains his own franchise under the name Fugazi.

"At this point, I don't even care about the money," says MacKaye. "I'm just doing it for the kids."

3 VELVET UNDERGROUND

These strategic entrepreneurs have never been afraid of going against the grain. In the late '60s, while everyone else was focusing on fly-by-night trends like "flower power," LSD, and Vietnam, the Velvets were patiently sowing the seeds of a cultural and marketing revolution. At first, their combination of dark lyrical themes, avant-garde noise, and performance art won few converts. But today, 25 years later, they can boast the largest and most profitable of all rock franchises. "Those swirling, buzzing guitars, ofay tribal rhythms, and detached, tuneless vocals have proven to be as good as gold," guitarist and chairman-of-the-board Lou Reed states proudly. Franchisees, using trade names such as Yo La Tengo, Eleventh Dream Day, the Feelies, and Luna enthusiastically agree.

"Our arrangement with Messrs. Reed and (bassist John) Cale has been outstanding," says Laetitia Sadier of franchisee Stereolab. "We have the rights to the bedrock 'Velvets' sound, but our contract leaves us free to add elements of our own, like the Beach Boys or Neu whenever we feel it's appropriate."

Lou Reed

Even if stylistic progressions remain few and far between, it looks like the Velvets' franchise will stay bullish for a long time to come.

4 BIG BLACK

It's no secret that shock value is a big part of the burgeoning "alternative" music scene, and no one understands its worth as fully as former Big Black bossman and recent *Crain's Chicago Business* "Top 40 Under 40" honoree Steve Albini. When not plagued by technical difficulties, Big Black unleashed a misanthropic onslaught of rigid pre-programmed rhythms and distorted martial shouting. The screeching treble-heavy style in which Albini played his guitar was nearly as distinctive as the funny little way he strapped it to his waist.

With his obsessive vision of America's dark underbelly, Albini gave voice to numerous alienated young Caucasians, eager to escape their collegiate surroundings. So compelling was Albini's concept that even unlikely associates like aspiring New Romantic anglophile Alain Jourgensen were moved to do business with Albini.

Steve Albini

"I won't deny that the dancefloor was good to me," says Jourgensen, "but I saw more long-term growth potential in aligning myself with Steve." Jourgensen adopted the Big Black sound, scrapped his European accents and affectations, and began addressing more perverse, sinister lyrical subject matter. As anyone who has perused Ministry's recent sales figures knows, his decision was a shrewd one—the band is wildly popular with mall shoppers worldwide.

Albini's empire extends well beyond his better-known franchisees like Ministry, Nine Inch Nails, KMFDM, Tar, Arsenal, and

and patterns that customers demand and deserve.

Shellac. Through his work with such seemingly unrelated artists as P.J. Harvey, the Pixies, and Nirvana, Albini has become highly sought-after for his hands-on approach to propagating the Big Black sound. His trademark ability to translate even the most limber polyrhythms into the reliable cadence of the Roland drum machine is rivaled only by the way he cleverly submerges the most commanding vocal performances into the surrounding din. Ever humble, Albini eschews the title "producer" altogether, preferring the more egalitarian "recorder," and in fact requests that his name not appear in the record's credits. Fortunately, there's no need for it: any project that's undergone the familiar Albini makeover is instantly recognizable.

5 HASIL ADKINS

Everyone loves a hillbilly. From Homer & Jethro to Jethro & Ellie May, Johnny Reb has always had a special place in the hearts of Yankees everywhere. This fact was not lost on the young Hasil Adkins.

"While at Vanderbilt," explains Adkins (MBA '61), "I noticed that my Northern classmates found no end of amusement in the mores and mannerisms of the rural, hill-dwelling Southerner. In an effort to capitalize on the popularity of 'hillbilly' music, I arranged a minstrel-type performance. The rest has, shall we say, written itself."

Hasil Adkins

After establishing his act and gaining legitimacy as a "drunkard" and a "madman," Adkins diversified. With his keen business sense he knew that both his music and the purported lifestyle that accompanied it were equally marketable.

"My harder and more aggressive acts may not sound very 'country,' but they draw heavily on the menacing, backwoods, '*Deliverance*-style' persona that I helped cultivate," Adkins observes. From "where are they nows?" like Tex & the Horseheads, the Hickoids, and Killdozer to up-and-comers like Flat Duo Jets and Shorty, "inbred boogie" and "har-de-har-hardcore" have flourished wherever audiences have deeply and innately feared Southerners.

Adkins has set his sights higher than the underground. While the excessive "cracker" overkill of bands like N.L. Mule always finds an audience, many more listeners prefer a kinder, gentler hillbilly.

That's where Adkins' "neo-bumpkinism" comes into play. "These guys are really my bread and butter," Adkins states with a grin. Realizing that the almost exclusively white neo-bumpkin demographic is adamant about preserving its musical heritage, Adkins only accepts franchisees whose aesthetic sensibilities are similarly purist.

"The roster never stops expanding," boasts Adkins, "from blue-chip outfits like Mojo Nixon and the Cramps to mavericks like the Southern Culture on the Skids, Palace Brothers, and Gomer and the Peas. I know firsthand that the hillbilly schtick affords the consumer the opportunity to simultaneously submerge their own suburban identities while ridiculing others to whom they feel superior, and it's an experience for which they'll happily pay. From where I'm standing, it's a win-win situation."

6 THE STOOGES

"They call it a dynasty," says Stooges CEO James Osterberg (aka Iggy Pop), "and I'm not inclined to disagree." From Paris to Sydney to Seattle, the Stooges' empire has only expanded since the band's demise in 1974.

So strong is the Stooges' brand-recognition that Osterberg has been able to ride out a long series of lean years without seeing his holdings diminish.

"I don't know what it is," Osterberg admits, "but the Stooges sound is like a good wash-and-wear suit: it never goes out of style." Indeed, the band's savage and relentless sound—not to mention their magnetic junkie mystique—set the ultimate standard for high-energy rock and roll. The user-friendly combination of simple, buzzsaw guitar riffs, tribal drumming, and monosyllabic caterwauling allows even the greenest of greenhorns to successfully launch a franchise. Natural-ly, the image-enhancing scag habit can be picked up with even greater ease.

James Osterberg

"I thought we were unskilled," Pop confesses, "until the first time I heard a band cover 'I Wanna Be Your Dog.' But a buck's a buck." Once he realized the unlimited franchise potential of the Stooges' sound, Osterberg wasted no time setting up operations worldwide. The Dead Boys, Thee Hypnotics, Mudhoney (before they jumped ship and joined the Adkins conglomerate), Union Carbide Productions, and countless others have all achieved notoriety for their various Stooges tributes.

It was Australia, however, that proved to be the land that launched 1000 franchises. While the island continent may be rich in unique indigenous fauna, it's virtually bereft of any native rockers who operate outside of the Stooges corporate umbrella: familiar franchisees include Radio Birdman, the Celibate Rifles, Bored!, and the Cosmic Psychos. And as *All in the Family* begat *Maude,* which in turn begat *Good Times,* so Stooges licensees the Birthday Party spawned outfits like the Jesus Lizard and the Laughing Hyenas.

For Osterberg, the rewards have boosted more than his self-esteem. "The returns on all of my subsidiaries have been excellent," Osterberg explains, "except perhaps the ones from France."

7 PATTI SMITH

"I'm honestly stunned at how big this whole thing has become" says the ever-modest Patti Smith. After years of offering essentially the same package—raw but lyrical rock coupled with poetry coming heavily out of French Romanticism and modernism ("but more feminine/ist because of who I am")—Ms. Smith became not only an icon, but an entrepreneur as well. In fact, she's retired from performing altogether to keep tabs on the many artists who have licensed her style. The success of more orthodox franchisees Courtney Love, P.J. Harvey, and Sinead O'Connor is well known (not to mention the lucrative "Riot Grrrl" market trend), but a smoother, less confrontational product line called "Smith Lite" is also making waves, featuring representatives like Liz Phair and Natalie Merchant.

Patti Smith

"This new generation of women could have found a sponsor and role model in any number of places," says Smith, "such as dance-music pioneers Donna Summer or Teena Marie, who wrote, played and produced all of her own records. I guess they just weren't erudite or white enough for today's alternative women. But don't get me wrong, I am enjoying all this." And with operations booming on both sides of the Atlantic, who can blame her? ■

NEXT ISSUE

Blue Chips: Five to Watch For

The Shaggs, Helmet, Teenage Jesus and the Jerks, Pavement, the Descendents

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THE ADVENTURES OF ADULT BOY
HE TAKES RESPONSIBILITY LIKE A MAN!
by T. LABAN ©94
YOUNG BOBBY HUTCHINS IS INDULGING IN TYPICAL CHILDHOOD PASTIMES WHEN HE HEARS THE CRY...
HARK!
DUCKING INTO A NEARBY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION, HE QUICKLY REEMERGES AS...
PECKERWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE
...ADULT BOY!!
WHERE IRRESPONSIBILITY'S VICTIMS WEEP, THERE MUST I GO!
ARRIVING AT THE SCENE:
WAAAH! MY PARENTS LEFT ME TO SELFISHLY PURSUE THEIR LIFESTYLES!
FEAR NOT!...
... I WILL DEFER MY OWN GRATIFICATION TO GIVE YOU THE OPPORTUNITIES YOU DESERVE!
QUICKLY, ADULT BOY FLIES TO A NEARBY EMPLOYMENT AGENCY...
MY NEW JOB DEMANDS LONG HOURS. BUT OFFERS BENEFITS AND CHANCES TO ADVANCE!
WITH LIGHTNING SPEED, HE EARNS PROMOTIONS AND LARGE RAISES AT WORK, WHILE PROVIDING FIRM GUIDANCE AND A NURTURING PRESENCE AT HOME.
I'M DONE WITH MY HOMEWORK NOW. CAN I WATCH TV?
ALL RIGHT. BUT MAKE SURE IT'S SOMETHING EDUCATIONAL.
SOON...
YOU'RE 18 NOW. WITH THE MONEY I'VE SAVED AND YOUR EXCELLENT GRADES, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET INTO ANY UNIVERSITY YOU WANT!
THANKS, ADULT BOY!
BACK TO LIFE AS NORMAL.
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING, BOBBY?
AW, JUST GOOFIN' AROUND.

With special assistance by Mr. John Hill

After MOTORBOOTY was plugged in a well-known men's fashion magazine, we received the following brochure in the mail. Further research by our crack team of investigative reporters uncovered the operations of one of the music industry's most powerful behind-the-scenes players. Even music consumers who thought they knew everything will probably find the results of our inquiries very illuminating.

Bank of Coolness and Credibility International

Are sudden fame and fortune undermining the "cool" and "credible" persona that you need for continued success?

Are your latest moves sparking cries of "sellout?"

Are you walking the tightrope between "hepness" and "profitability" with the same skill as your competitors?

The Bank of Coolness and Credibility International has the answers.

As leading players in the "indie" revolution, we don't need to tell you that the times, they have-a-changed. Your friends from Green River are at the top of the charts, selling more records than all of the former members of Genesis combined. Chicago's Smashing Pumpkins are nominated for a Grammy. "Grunge" fashions have invaded the runways of Paris and New York.

But that doesn't mean you've got it made. Your hard-won fame and financial security have pushed you onto a perilous highwire. Charges of "selling out" are as close as the next issue of Details and you can't afford to weather them. In fact, your continued stardom actually depends on you retaining your detached, ironic "coolness" and signature "indie credibility."

That's where BCCI can help. By carefully monitoring how the indie cognoscenti are reacting to your latest exploits, we provide you with up-to-the-minute accounting of your coolness and credibility standing. And with creative and original image-planning, we help maximize your account balance, insuring that your stay on the "post-indie highwire" is a long and prosperous one.

How do we do it?

We begin with people.

Each member of the BCCI team has a minimum of five years experience in indie subculture. They come from fields as diverse as college radio, fanzine publication, and musical performance. We also require our staff to participate in a thorough "continuing indie education" program, studying the many roots and source points of alternative subculture as well as current and future market trends.

We make the best use of technology.

To gauge responses to your actions and to help plan for your future, we rely on state-of-the-art polling and focus-group techniques. To provide you with the most timely and accurate accounting of your "C&C" standing, we use the most advanced computer models available.

We keep in touch.

Each quarter you will receive a comprehensive balance sheet reflecting all of your activities for the period—including recordings, media appearances, public relations events, etc.—that affect your "C&C" standing. Each item is then assigned a "C&C" value, measured in our unique currency of "hepnote credits." At the end of each year, we provide a complete summary of your account activity.

We provide answers that work.

We know that keeping your "cred" up isn't easy. That's why our Image Planning Department is there to craft effective solutions to your unique image problems and plan strategically to maximize your "cred" in the future. Perhaps it's time for an arrest, or maybe just some carefully placed rumors of unprovoked violence. Other situations may call for suggestions of sexual deviance, body mutilation, suicide, or narcotics abuse. Confessional interviews or memoirs covering any or all of the above subjects can be particularly effective tools for "cred" management, and don't discount the potential of recording a tune on the right tribute or compilation disc. The professionals at BCCI can help find the solutions that work for you.

We keep costs down.

You might think that such invaluable services would come only at a prohibitive price. Well think again. Our fees for a standard "C&C" monitoring account are not much higher than those for a typical savings or money market account, and our Image Planning Department can tailor its services to meet your budgetary needs. Most importantly, unlike traditional financial services, which reward you solely in dollars and cents, BCCI's program improves your rep while it increases your riches.

How can you become a BCCI customer?

It's easy. Just call our toll-free number for account applications and any additional information you may need. Your record label or publisher may also have applications on hand.

BCCI Customer Service Hotline

1-800-GET-BCCI

2576 Buena Vista Blvd. Hollywood, CA 91602

1 | 96865-0135-63-20946-26

MINISTRY
1653 N. DAMEN
CHICAGO, IL 60647

DATE OF TRANSACTION	DESCRIPTION OF TRANSACTION	HEPNOTE CREDITS	HEPNOTE DEBITS
			8,975-
			972,750
			946-
	"ALAIN JOURGENSEN"		
1981	*WITH SYMPATHY*	525	
1983	"(EVERYDAY IS) HALLOWEEN"	950	
1984	DESTRUCTION OF INTERVIEW TAPE WHERE JOURGENSEN SPEAKS WITH BRITISH	400	
1986	ACCENTS AND CONFESSES ANGLOPHILIA	724	
	ADRIAN SHERWOOD PRODUCTION ON *TWITCH*	10	
1986	"AL JOURGENSEN"	95	
1988	PAILHEAD	840	
1988	ADOPTION OF RIGHTS OF THE ACCUSED'S LOOK/MANNERISMS	20	
1988		401	
		450	
	VEGA	399	
		1,575	
		5,465	
	ABUSE	900	
	CROWD	754	
	ET'S GET PHYSICAL" AND SUBSEQUENT LAWSUIT	1	
	ON "JESUS BUILT MY HOT ROD"	640	
		50	
		899	
	IN "JUST ONE FIX" VIDEO	24	
	JUST ONE FIX" DIRECTION CREDIT		
	UCTION CREDITS		

OANS THIS STATEMENT PERIOD

NCH NAILS	643-
E	50-
RAX	895-
E MODE	1,450-
TING COCKS	165-
	85-
242	165-
HOMO DJS	165-

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NI
5520
L 60625

DESCRIPTION OF TRANSACTION	HEPNOTE CREDITS	HEPNOTE DEBITS
		425-
		1,705-
MONTANA RESIDENCE	480	
HIGH SCHOOL MIME TROUPE MEMBERSHIP	500	
LUNGS INSERTS (INCLUDING OWN BLOOD)	894	
BULLDOZER'S STEEL SLEEVE		650-
PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF MAJOR LABELS	595	
GUITAR BELT		495-
STEVEN JESSE BERNSTEIN'S OPENING APPEARANCE AT LAST BIG BLACK SHOW	194	
SONGS ABOUT FUCKING		
"RUN NIGGER RUN" (COLLABORATION WITH		
DECISION TO NAME BAND "RAPEMAN"		
PIXIES' *SURFER ROSA* PRODUCTION CREDI'		
RAPEMAN		
WEDDING PRESENT PRODUCTION CREDIT		
DECISION TO RECORD BANDS ACCORDING T		
MENTION IN *CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS*		
SHELLAC		
PJ HARVEY PRODUCTION CREDITS		
NIRVANA'S IN UTERO PRODUCTION CREDI		
PUBLIC DENUNCIATION OF *IN UTERO*		
JESUS LIZARD PRODUCTION CREDITS		
DENUNCIATION OF URGE OVERKILL IN *CH*		
DENUNCIATION OF HELMET		
PUBLICIZATION OF DECISION TO RECORD		
"WHAT'S WRONG WITH MUSIC" ARTICLE		
DENUNCIATION OF JESUS LIZARD'S MAJO		
CAMEO APPEARANCE ON *MY SO-CALLED LI*		

OUTSTANDING LOANS THIS S'
POSTER CHILDREN
NIRVANA
BOB WESTIN
URGE OVERKILL
(FORECLOSED)
PJ HARVEY
JESUS LIZARD
NAKED RAYGUN
BREAKING CIRCUS
N.L. MULE
TOUCH & GO

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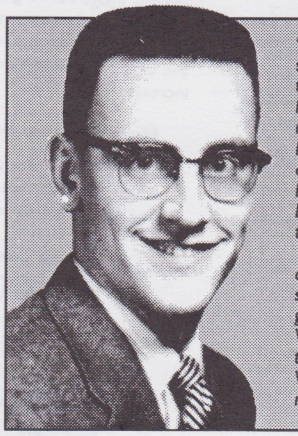
Wayne State

Up Close and Personal



"Here at BCCI we understand that image is everything," says image-enhancement account executive Wayne State. "When I handle an account, I'm in charge. I'm the quarterback and it's always the bottom of the ninth with the bases loaded."

After earning his MBA at Harvard, where he spent four years as program director of WHRB, Wayne joined the BCCI team in 1980. Since then, Wayne has had one winning season after another.

Hole in one!

"I'm particularly proud of my work with Mighty Joe Young, a struggling Los Angeles ska band with distressingly low credibility and very limited cash flow," says Wayne.

Combining his marksman's eye for sociomusical trends with his keen creative instincts, Wayne convinced the band that a directional change was in order. Two-tones were replaced with earth tones, checkerboards with plaids. Blue beats were exchanged for grunge beats, and these Vespa-riding rude boys soon became the sullen, politically aware young men you now know as Stone Temple Pilots.

"We at BCCI saw to every detail. We even suggested the rocking chair."

Sacrifice fly!

As one of BCCI's All-Stars, Wayne is never afraid to play hardball. He knows that sometimes the most painful choices yield the greatest rewards.

At a recent luncheon with members of New Order, Wayne and the band agreed that the death of Ian Curtis, as tragic as it was, yielded far greater returns than even the most optimistic forecasts predicted at the time. Not only did it ensure Curtis' legacy, it created a base of credibility that allowed the remaining members to diversify their forays into the pop world.

Wayne has since applied this lesson in his consultations with other clients, most notably Nirvana, the Gin Blossoms, and Hole.

The thrill of victory!

Wayne's involvement with the music industry is not strictly confined to artists. He also concerns himself with shaping the various media outlets that feature them.

His extensive work with MTV resulted in the development of their acclaimed news programming. MTV felt that it was essential to project a political outlook that would appeal to young people who are "tuned in" to alternative culture. Knowing that their standard programming often fell short of portraying these progressive attitudes, MTV, with the help of BCCI, created *MTV News*.

"This forum allowed the network to establish its conscience without sacrificing its glandular mainstream appeal," says Wayne. "I also take personal pride in having beaten the odds to establish Tabitha Soren as a journalist."

In addition, MTV, with the help of BCCI, has begun to implement a more reliable programming schedule. "We're putting the 'TV' back in MTV," explains Wayne. "Our two-step plan involves introducing original shows which we feel meet the standards of the average MTV viewer, and gradually phasing out music videos altogether."

He shoots, he scores!

As a forward-thinking professional, Wayne knows the importance of identifying and serving the needs of the modern rock consumer. "We've taken the highly effective marketing tools used in the film and television industries—test audiences, surveys, wiretaps—and tailored them to the fickle rock marketplace."

Wayne's most dramatic triumph came recently with a fledgling outfit unsure of where to go with their brooding good looks and impressive punk pedigree. "In order to ensure that the band Mookie Blaylock would reach the peak demographic, targeted public outreach was necessary. We distributed questionnaires to the audience at many of the band's early shows, inquiring into all aspects of their lifestyle—age, disposable income, hair length/plaid preference, the works."

Using the data gathered from these sources, BCCI was able to assist the band in making a few key decisions. "Are our methods effective?," asks Wayne rhetorically. "Well, does the name Pearl Jam mean anything to you?"

Bank of Coolness and Credibility International

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Bank of Coolness and Credibility International

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BCCI
Accounts Auditing Dept.
Rose Hipps

Dear Mr. Moore:

As you know, we at BCCI greatly value your patronage. Your tireless accumulation of credibility serves as a model to our other customers and has helped to establish BCCI as the leader in its field.

However, there is a matter that we believe should be brought to your attention. While we admire your generosity, we believe that it is in your best interest and ours to more carefully select the recipients of your credibility loans. Of course, some of these accounts have proved to be quite remunerative, but a troubling number are dangerously overdrawn. We strongly encourage you to seek assistance from our underwriting department before making any further extensions of credibility.

Sincerely,

Rose Hipps

Accounts Coordinator

RH/cf

2 | 93345-2353-42-73812-07

SONIC YOUTH
84 ELDRIDGE ST. #5
NEW YORK, NY 10002

DATE OF TRANSACTION	DESCRIPTION OF TRANSACTION		
1986	ECSTATIC PEACE	960	
1987	CRIME COVER ON *SISTER* ("HOT WIRE MY HEART")	120	
1988	SPLIT SUB POP SINGLE WITH MUDHONEY	17	
1988	KIM'S L.L. COOL J INTERVIEW IN *SPIN*	10	
1989	HARRY CREWS	265	
1990	DGC SIGNING		1,200-
1990	RAYMOND PETTIBON COVER ART FOR *GOO*	1,750	
1990	IAN MACKAYE CAMEO ON *DIRTY*	205	
1990	CHUCK D CAMEO ON "KOOL THING"	75	
1991	GOLD MOUNTAIN MANAGEMENT BEGINS		880-
1991	*THE YEAR PUNK BROKE*		315-
1992	YAMATSUKA EYE COLLABORATION	450	
1992	FREE KITTEN	2	
1992	KIM'S GAP AD		630-
1992	THURSTON'S JAM SESSIONS WITH JAZZ PLAYERS (WILLIAM HOOKER, ETC.)	922	
1992	THURSTON'S ROLAND KIRK T-SHIRT	217	
1992	SONG ABOUT JOE COLE "100%" ON *DIRTY*	12	
1992	MIKE KELLEY COVER ART FOR *DIRTY*	1,100	
1993	SMELLS LIKE RECORDS	413	
1993	X-GIRL		945-
1993	THURSTON'S PERCENTAGE FOR SIGNING CELL, SLOAN, AND ST. JOHNNY		1,595-
1994	THURSTON'S STICKER QUOTES ON PAT METHENY RECORD		227-
1994	PUBLIC FRATERNIZATION WITH BEASTIE BOYS	345	
1994	THURSTON'S JAM SESSION WITH BECK ON COLLEGE RADIO	800	
1994	STEVE SHELLEY'S TOUR WITH THE RAINCOATS	220	
1994	THURSTON'S ASSOCIATION WITH KEIJI HAINO	758	
1994	APPEARANCE *ON LATE SHOW WITH DAVID LETTERMAN*	950	
1994	"MECHT MENSCH" NAME DROP ON MTV'S *120 MINUTES*	850	
1994	HARRY PUSSY VIDEO PLUG ON *120 MINUTES*	197	
1994	THURSTON'S ECSTATIC PEACE PLUG ON *120 MINUTES*		759-
1994	THURSTON'S DAVE MARKEY PLUG ON *120 MINUTES*	100	
1994	KATHLEEN HANNA APPEARANCE IN "BULL IN THE HEATHER" VIDEO	16	
1994	APPEARANCE ON *JON STEWART SHOW*		1,005-
1994	THURSTON'S GUITAR CAMEO ON R.E.M.'S *MONSTER*		1,595-
1994	BAND LAMPOONED IN *MOTORBOOTY* MAGAZINE	150,000	

OUTSTANDING LOANS THIS STATEMENT PERIOD

BECK	54-	DON FLEMING	2,150-
BEASTIE BOYS	20-	FIREHOSE	850-
BIKINI KILL	795-	HOLE	600-
BOREDOMS	40-	LYDIA LUNCH	412-
BORBETOMAGUS	1,007-	MADONNA	12-
BREEDERS	350-	NIRVANA	84-
CELL	850-	ROYAL TRUX	68-
DAS DAMEN	40-	SLOAN	861-
DINOSAUR JR.	512-	ST. JOHNNY	945-

NEW BALANCE AS OF 10/31/94 1,141,951

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After MOTORBOOTY was plugged in a young urban contemporary magazine, we received the following brochure in the mail. Further research by our crack team of investigative reporters uncovered the operations of one of the music industry's most powerful behind-the-scenes players. Even music consumers who thought they knew everything will probably find the results of our inquiries very illuminating.

Bank of Coolness and Credibility International

Do you still have the skills to represent the hardcore streets?

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As an O.G of the rap revolution, you know that Amerikkka is blunted on the hip-hop nation. Your cousin Snoop Doggy Dog is clockin' platinum and makin' mad money. Hip-hop flicks like Menace II Society and House Party 3 have blown up big. Extra large "fly" gear is all over mannequins from K Mart to Lord & Taylor. What's up with that?

Your gold records and bulging wallet have put you in a tight spot, trying to stay true to the brother man while you're getting paid by the other man. Charges that you're soft, frontin', or just plain "wack" are as close as the next issue of The Source, and that kind of disrespect would be improper. If you want to stay in full effect, it's not enough to wreck the mic with slammin' rhymes; you've got to stay rugged and hard, the same black ruff-neck who came up strong back in the day.

That's where BCCI can be your straight-up "main man." By "peepin'" the streets, we provide you with an up-to-the-minute accounting of your coolness and credibility standing. And with def image planning, we can keep your account phat, ensuring that your profile remains high, even after you've released your second album.

How do we do it?

We begin with people.

Each member of the BCCI posse has a minimum of five years "in the house." They come from fields as diverse as spinning, mixing, and gang-banging. We also require our staff to stay true to the game through a fresh "continuing urban education" program.

We make the best use of technology.

To check the pulse of your public and to help plan for your future, we rely on only the latest "411." To provide you with the deepest and dopest accounting of your "C&C" standing, we use the mackinest Macs available.

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As regularly as Flavor Flav gets hassled by the Man we'll send you a boss balance sheet sampling all of your activities for the period—including recordings, court dates, and other media appearances—that affect your "C&C" standing. Each item is then assigned a "C&C" value, measured in our unique currency of "hardcore credits." At the end of each year, we provide a complete rap sheet of your account activity.

We provide answers that work.

We've got the knowledge to keep your image in the streets when your "ass" is in the suites. Perhaps it's time to give your "ho" a beat-down or bust some caps on a sucker MC who has "bitten" your style. Or, if you want to prove you're "down" with the Red, Black and Green, it's never too late to join the Nation of Islam and change your name accordingly. You can drop righteous Asiatic science like an H-bomb, exposing the master plans and evil schemes of the devil man all while you deposit his check.

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It's easy. Just beep us and an account representative will promptly call you back to answer any questions. Your record label or bodyguard may also have applications on hand.

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JACKET CLEAN AND PRESSED
BLACK SHOES SHINED
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YES!
MMMM
HO-HUM
YAWN
ZZZZ
No Skinny Scare-Crow for me!
Boinng!
I go for a TALL man
the tomato you get depends on the lettuce you have!
Now! bustline increased!
Glamour Developer
can you measure up?
INVISIBLE HEIGHT PAD
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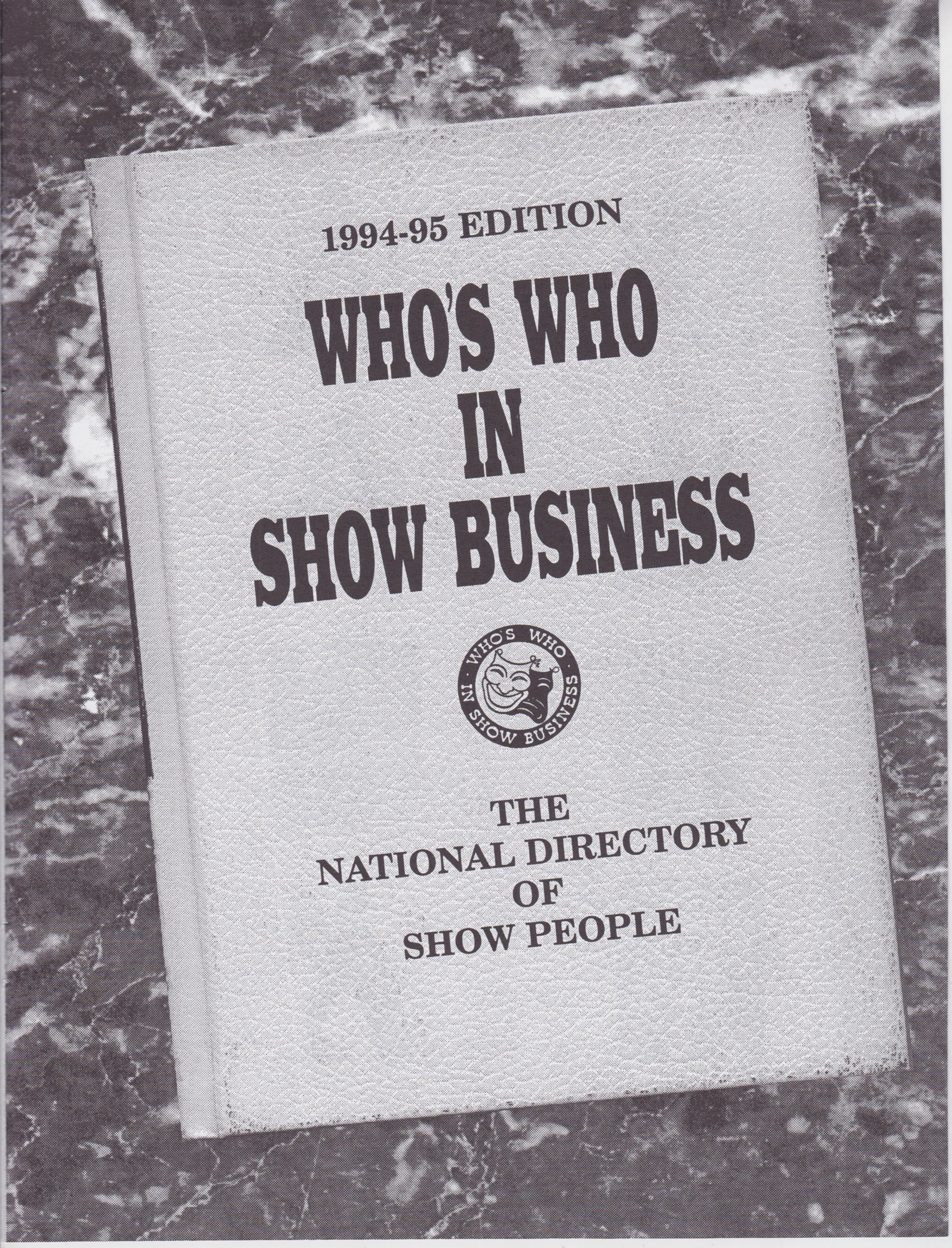

1994-95 EDITION
WHO'S WHO
IN
SHOW BUSINESS
WHO'S WHO IN SHOW BUSINESS
THE
NATIONAL DIRECTORY
OF
SHOW PEOPLE

BECK
(The funny li'l folkie)

"Laughing all the way to the bank"

Credits: "Loser"; sings in Spanish; plays leaf blower; breakdances

Contact: WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY

JULIANA HATFIELD
(Grunge lite)

"Become what you wear"

Credits: Evan Dando

Contact: WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY

JELLO BIAFRA
(Radical rib-tickling)

"The countercultural clown"

Credits: Will crow for cock; also a mimic

Contact: WHO'S WHO IN SHOW BUSINESS

HELMET
(Preppie metal)

"I can't believe it's not jazz!"

Credits: Got signed for a million bucks

Contact: INTERNATIONAL CREATIVE MANAGEMENT

BREEDERS
(Young adult contemporary)

"Twice as good as the Pixies, with only half the fat!"

Credits: Ready to fight

Contact: WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY

HOLE
(The widow Cobain)

"Hole is a group"

Credits: Photogenic and heroin-free!

Contact: WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY

GREEN DAY
(The punk Sha Na Na)

"You can teach young dogs old tricks"

Credits: Woodstock; sing with British accents; funny pants

Contact: INTERNATIONAL CREATIVE MANAGEMENT

ICE-T
(The most controversial of the Ices)

"Fuck you Ice Cube"

Credits: "Cop Killer"

Contact: WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY

MUSICIANS

JESUS LIZARD
(Simulated street-person punk)

"Hallelujah I'm a bum!"

Credits: Better than the Cows; haven't sold out yet; singer's crazy

Contact: THE BILLIONS CORPORATION

L7
(Feminist cock rock)

"Pretend that we're men"

Credits: Have all their shots

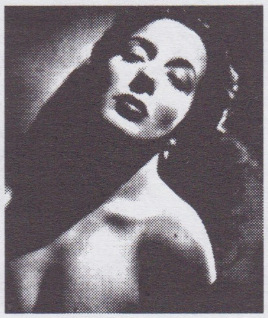
Contact: CREATURE BOOKING

PAVEMENT
(Tongue-in-chic grad-school rock)

"No big hair"

Credits: Winner, Sassy's "Cute Band Alert" three months in a row

Contact: THE BILLIONS CORP



LIZ PHAIR
(Music that's better than it sounds)

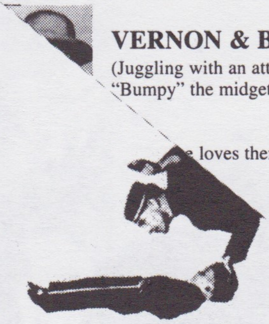
"Young, gifted, and white"

Credits: Poses topless, sings about fellatio, has own apartment

Contact: TWIN TOWERS

NOVELTY ACTS — JUGGLERS

NOVELTY ACTS — JUGGLERS



VERNON & BUMPY
(Juggling with an attitude; featuring "Bumpy" the midget)

... loves them"

PORNO FOR PYROS
(Mime meets rock)

"Everything great about Los Angeles"

Credits: Singer was in Jane's Addiction

Contact: WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY

SEBADOH
(Sensitive balladeers)

"Not afraid to cry"

Credits: Use bedroom for recording, not love

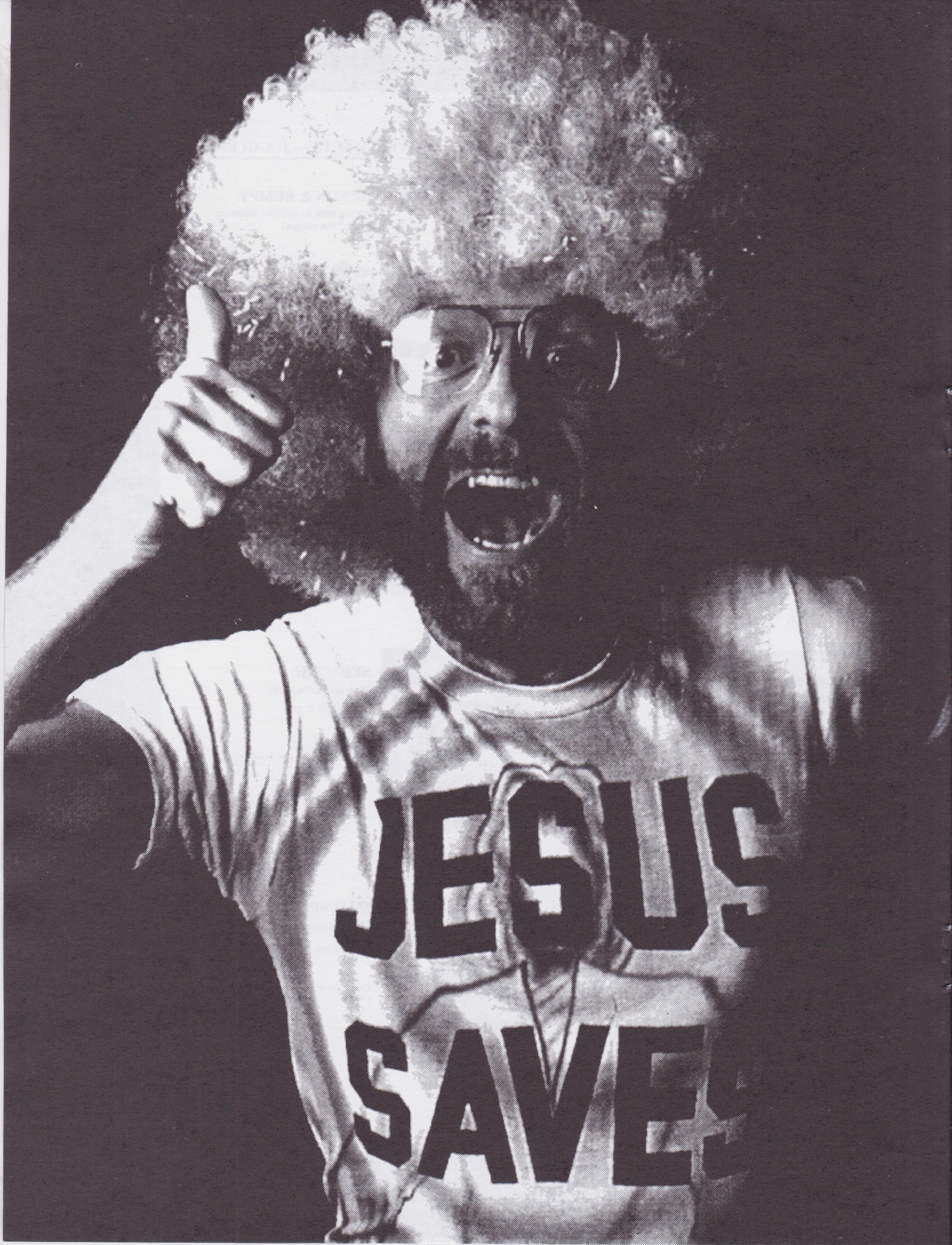
Contact: FLOWER BOOKING

SMASHING PUMPKINS
(The amazing one-man band)

"Plays loud, but sounds soft"

Credits: Multicultural cross-dressing from Chicago

Contact: CREATIVE ARTISTS AGENCY


JESUS
SAVES

RAINBOWHEAD SPEAKS

When a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh and the thing does not happen and the word is not fulfilled, then it has not been said by Yahweh. The prophet has spoken presumptuously. You have nothing to fear from him.
—Deuteronomy 18:21

Rollen Frederick Stewart—aka Rainbow Head, aka Rock 'n' Rollen, aka Rainbow Man, aka prisoner #H87708—is probably familiar to anyone who watched televised sports in the '70s and '80s. With his outrageous rainbow-colored wig and his ubiquitous on-camera mugging, Stewart single-handedly raised the concept of "Hi Mom!" to an art form. An unavoidable eyesore at backyard croquet matches and Super Bowls alike, his freakish appearance and perfect attendance made him as well known (if not as well loved) in the wide world of sports as Howard Cosell or Don King.

Born in Spokane, Washington, and orphaned at an early age, Stewart grew up desiring nothing more than what most Americans want—sex, drugs, and three hours of prime time. After an undistinguished career as a snowmobile racer he left home for Hollywood stardom. Many failed attempts to land a gig as the San Diego Chicken followed before Stewart decided to stake his claim as a professional nuisance.

It was on ABC's *Monday Night Football*—home to the similarly glory-bound O.J. Simpson—where Stewart rose to fame. As one of the more conspicuous members of the crowd, Rainbow Head was easily spotted by the roving cameras that scanned the stands for big-foam-finger-wavers, scantily clad females, and other "interesting" fans. Before long he was making his presence known not only at almost every single sporting event but at such high-profile functions as the 1984 Republican National Convention, Zsa Zsa Gabor's 1989 cop-slapping trial, and the 1990 American Music Awards.

But even the singular honor of being the subject of both a *Saturday Night Live* skit and a *Peanuts* cartoon failed to satisfy Rainbow Head's lofty ambitions. Inspired by a religious conversion (and no small amount of marijuana), he turned to the ever-more desperate antics—like blowing an airhorn at the 16th hole during the 1991 Masters Tournament, setting off stinkbombs at televangelist Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral, and staging a would-be terrorist raid at Los Angeles International Airport—that eventually led him to his current address: the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo.

MOTORBOOTY caught up with Rock 'n' Rollen during visiting hours in an effort to discover just what it is that makes a man don a brightly colored hairpiece, perpetrate pranks, and take hostages in the name of the Lord.

■ MOTORBOOTY: *Why the rainbow wig?*

■ RAINBOW HEAD: It was a dream I had in Technicolor® in 1976. Taking a cue from the streakers, I saw that I could create a character that would be world-famous overnight if I only had an identifiable hook, especially if that hook was a rainbow Afro wig. Then I finally found the wig in a store window and became the Rainbow Man on the spot.

■ *What were you trying to prove?*

■ That I could be world-famous overnight and do TV commercials without waiting in a Hollywood casting line. My ultimate goal was to be in the Screen Actors Guild, spend an occasional day shooting a commercial, then sit back and collect the residual checks. You might have seen the commercial I did for Anheuser-Busch, that was the last one I did.

■ *You appeared in a lot of commercials?*

■ Well, that was actually the only one. That was the peak. Everybody loved the Rainbow Man. When I was on TV people were in my pocket. They were on TV with me, sitting behind home plate, getting rowdy. I actually hated sports and only used them as a vehicle because of the large number of people who watch. All the while I was just praying for extra innings or double overtime, anything to extend the length of my airtime.

■ *How did you get on camera?*

I studied the broadcasts of the event beforehand, monitored the camera shots live with a Sony Watchman, and afterward watched the highlights. Since I was always critiquing myself with the monitor I could see if they were trying to cut me off and adjust my position accordingly. Tickets were always given to me at the gate. In 14 years I never had a ticket until I got there. I always thanked God for the ticket, for the openness of the fans, and for the blindness of security.

■ *Why did you choose John 3:16 as your motto?*

■ After "the Wave" became popular, I realized that we're living at the end of the age. Judgment Day is upon us. I was led to the Lord, and I began to see that the Hollywood high I was chasing was just shallow and expensive. So after 1980 I didn't use the wig and I switched attention from myself to the John 3:16 message—"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life"—because I thought it was catchier. I wanted to spread the message in a way that wouldn't intimidate people. They could look up the verse in the privacy of their own homes. Eventually, the message became subliminal, because it was on TV so much. People began to see it when it wasn't there, they began to see it under their beds at night.

■ *Then what?*

■ I sold my ranch, lived in my car, and drove sixty thousand miles a year. I worked 12 events a month and subsisted on only one meal a day and ample supplies of pot. I spoke, published a newsletter and received donations. I drew up a list of different prophecy teachers I wanted the media to contact, so I created another character, a backslid Christian who was mad at the church. I would set off a stink bomb and yell "Jesus thinks this stinks!" so the press would have to go to those prophecy teachers wanting to know what they were saying that would have upset this person so much. I wasn't actually critical of their teachings at all—it was just a publicity stunt. Considering what I was trying to do for them I don't appreciate that they tried to have me arrested.

All eyes are on Rainbowhead at the LA Coliseum

■ *What did the stink bombs smell like?*

■ I used skunk glands in combination with synthetic materials. I used air horns, I used whoopee cushions—any way I could think of to stop the event and turn attention to whatever I thought I was trying to say. Eventually I started leaving press clippings and rainbow Afro wigs as calling cards and started taking more drastic measures.

■ *Like your nine-hour standoff at LA International Airport?*

■ Correct. I went into the Hyatt Regency and barricaded myself in a room by nailing the door shut. An illegal alien maid who was already there locked herself in the bathroom and became part of my presentation. Then I asked for the media. I had a .45 automatic as a lever, so if they didn't meet my demands I was going to shut down the airport by shooting into the air.

■ *Reportedly, you also lured two migrant workers by posing as a contractor, intending to use them as hostages, but they escaped.*

■ Their English wasn't good so it was hard to let them know I wasn't going to hurt them. Likewise, it was hard to console the maid through the door, since she kept the water running.

■ *What were your demands?*

■ I wanted three hours of network television prime time in which to explain—in a long dissertation—the situation in world politics, the weather situation, and the things related to the Second Coming of Jesus. I just wanted to get on camera and get some things off my chest. However, my message was blocked. I put "John 3:16" signs up in the windows, but I wasn't allowed any kind of hookup with the press accumulated at the base of the hotel. They told me that even if California fell off into the ocean they wouldn't give me three hours. I threatened to kill George Bush and Bill Clinton, I said I was the anti-Christ, anything I could think of to make them take me seriously. I was considering self-immolation when the SWAT team broke the door down and took me away.

■ *Since you didn't get on TV, and since the courtroom was often empty during your trial, would you say you failed completely?*

■ I guess I should have done something more horrendous. Nowadays it takes a special story to get the top headline. Unfortunately, it was my goal not to hurt anyone so I was limited in what I could do. If my faith would have only allowed me to massacre some innocents I probably could have gotten some coverage. As it was I got the max—three concurrent life sentences—because of bigotry.

■ *But isn't it true that you could have plea-bargained for a 12-year sentence, but you insisted on going to trial?*

■ Christ and all the apostles and the prophets were persecuted throughout the Bible for their

beliefs. Persecution is part of the territory. If you're not being persecuted, you're not doing the work. The world needs a scapegoat, so they try to justify their hatred of Jesus Christ by making me the problem.

■ ***Do you have any regrets?***

■ No, I tried my heart out for 14 years because the spiritual condition of man is in deep jeopardy. At my trial my defense was the necessity of committing a crime to prevent a greater harm. A person spending eternity in hell being tortured forever is an awful thought, so I had to do everything possible to draw attention to the fact that man had a critical choice to make. If you saw a house on fire you might have to trample a few kids to warn the people inside. We're talking about eternity here.

■ ***You've been giving a definite date for the Rapture and the end of the world.***

■ The Rapture will come as early as September 7 of this year, but don't start giving me a hard time if it doesn't happen right on schedule. All we know is that it will come on some Rosh Hashanah, and that everything is on line for the Lord to come and the world to go into a nuclear situation. Russia and the Muslims will attack Israel, we'll back Israel, and bing-bam-boom, it'll be a one day nuclear war. Ezekiel gives a blow-by-blow account.

■ ***What's the worst thing about prison?***

■ The loss of my freedom. I was in a position where I had an audience of 2.8 billion through satellite dishes and technology. Now I can only spread my faith in the yard to criminals who consider me a woman.

■ ***Are you still a celebrity?***

■ I get no calls and no visits. The whole world has abandoned me. My wife even married a Muslim.

■ ***I'm sorry.***

■ She'll have to answer for her misdeeds in the final hour, though.

■ ***Reportedly you tried to choke her during the 1986 World Series at Shea Stadium for standing in the wrong spot with her "John 3:16" sign.***

■ What difference is that going to make at the end of the world? I still have work to do, and I've got two or three disciples out there posting the signs. I call it "John 3:16 Ministries." We're working on the World Cup soccer tournament now.

■ ***Do you think your antics have actually influenced anyone to find religion?***

■ Not so much to find religion, but I've made them accountable. The 2.8 billion people who watch the World Cup, for instance, will be accountable to God when they have to stand in judgment for what they knew and what they didn't know because they'll have seen the "John 3:16" signs.

■ ***Where's the wig today?***

■ I went through several but they've all perished in flames. ■

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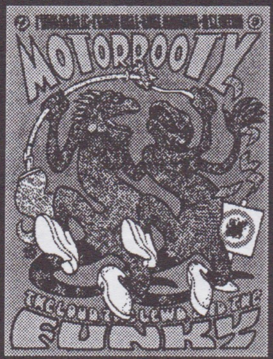

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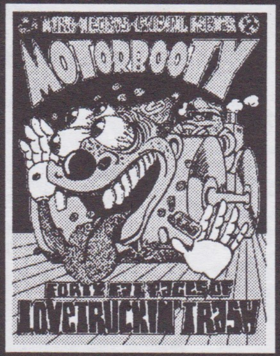

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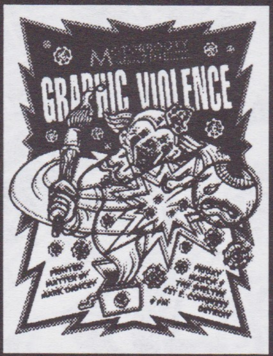

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SOUTHERN
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Orion the Hunter
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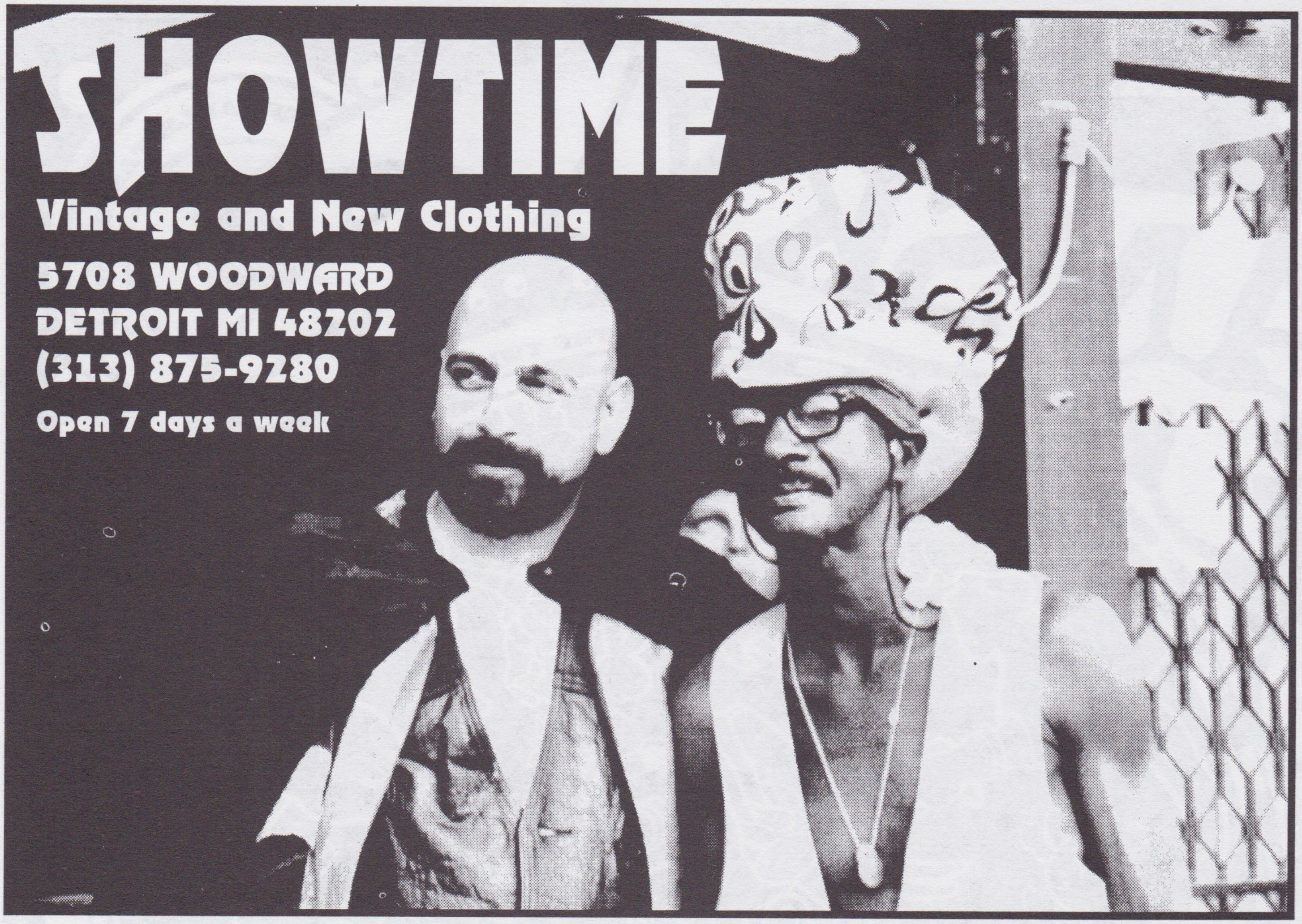
The Spirit of 76
Jim Crow
The Great Satan
Fountain of Youth
A Girl's Best Friend
Pie in the Sky
Every Mother's Son



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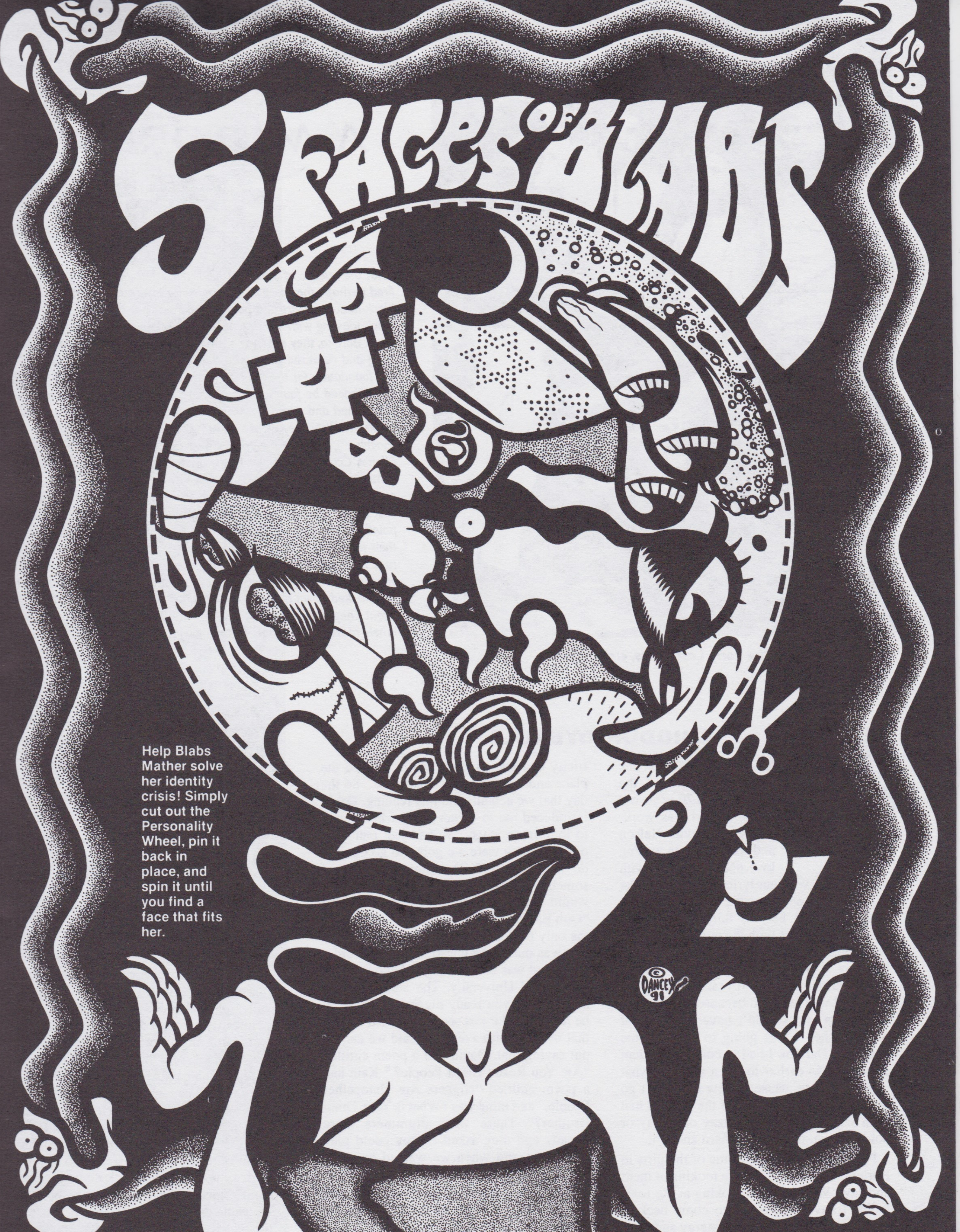
5 FACES OF BLABS
Help Blabs Mather solve her identity crisis! Simply cut out the Personality Wheel, pin it back in place, and spin it until you find a face that fits her.
DANCEY 91

NOT SCARED

A MOTORBOOTY

THE

The early Last Poets, circa 1970

With the release of their first album in 1970, New York City's Last Poets fired perhaps the most incendiary volley in the revolutionary union of black-nationalist art and politics. The Poets not only infused traditional black toasting with the urgent race consciousness of Malcolm X and Amiri Baraka, they set their rhymes on top of traditional African drumming and delivered them with the incantatory energy of free jazz, laying the foundation for the hip-hop nation. Understanding that the truth could indeed be found in the "lie-bury," they unleashed meticulously researched and stirringly executed indictments of injustice and calls for revolt. Whether they were skewering the hubris of technophilia ("Mean Machine"), decrying the oppressive racist grip of drugs and welfare ("Jones Comin' Down"), or boldly dissecting the political apathy of their community ("Niggers Are Scared of Revolution"), the Poets were as rigorous as they were intense. Today's rappers are heavily indebted to the Last Poets' innovations; unfortunately, many draw more from the Poets' pointless jabs at gays and Jews than from their meter-bending verse or their ferociously complex wordplay which seethed with white-hot black rage. Although the group has comprised a cast of characters so vast and volatile as to make Gravity's Rainbow seem simple, MOTORBOOTY has tracked down all three Poets who appeared on their landmark debut. They may be older than Old School, but the Last Poets still have a timely message to impart to the new-jack generation.

ABIODUN OYEWOLE

■ ABIODUN: I was one of the founders of the group; I was 20 years old at the time. I was working with David Nelson and we were both writing love poetry, playing with all the ladies with our lyrics. Poetry was like a toy. Then one evening over dinner he mentioned that he was thinking of doing something serious with the poetry, that there was going to be a reading for Malcolm X's birthday at Mt. Morris Park, and would I like to participate? I said yeah, I'll help you out, but I was petrified because I was raised in Queens and I didn't have any idea of what the hell I was going to say to some people in Harlem. I had to come to Harlem a week or so earlier to get a vibe for what was happening, cause I knew I couldn't go up on stage and read any of the things I had been writing—it wasn't jazzy or brassy or bold enough, it didn't cut hard enough.

I was intimidated by some of the girls in Harlem; they would see me looking at them and say, 'What are you looking at me for?' I didn't have any words to come back at them. Harlem had all of the energy and electricity that just gave me chills. I loved the place and wanted to be a part of it. So the day that we actually did this reading, David introduced me to Gylan Kain, who wanted to join us on stage. We had just met each other, so how were we going to go out and do some poetry? The thought was that somebody would read and the other two would sing background. We tried singing "Ooh Baby Baby" and it was quite clear that the only person who could sing was me, so that was out of the question. I had heard a chant that was used during a demonstration at Howard University. The students were saying "Are you ready niggers? You got to be ready," and it just seemed so bold to hear that over the airwaves, so I said we can go out saying that. David had a poem entitled "Are You Ready Black People?," Kain had a poem entitled "Niggers Are Untogether People," and mine was "What is Your Thing Brother?" There were drummers there already and they asked if they could play behind us, and when we walked on stage saying "Are You Ready Niggers?" the whole park started singing with us and everything from then on was history.

continued

JALAL

■ ***MOTORBOOTY: How did you get involved with the Last Poets originally?***

■ JALAL: I was a poet already. Gylan Kain and David Nelson and Abiodun were poets and they had formed a writer's workshop. We had no intention of going into show business. We were about politicizing the community and making them aware of what was happening, as well as articulating what the legacy of 400 years of slavery meant and how it was affecting us psychologically, physiologically, biologically, and economically, so we could understand what we were suffering from. We needed to articulate that in an art form that we could understand. A producer named Alan Douglas offered us a record contract, which surprised us since we weren't a singing group, but we recorded with him in 1969. He sat on the record for a year because he didn't know what to do with it. In the meantime, Abiodun decided to follow some African leader down south and got busted for some armed robbery thing that he pulled off in the name of African liberation, or whatever he thought it was. He went against our will, and

OF REVOLUTION

Exclusive by Mike Rubin

LAST POETS

NURIDDIN

he fell and stayed in the joint for four years. In the meantime, that just left me and Umar and Nilaja, the conga player.

The first Last Poets album put rap on the map. We made the second record, *This is Madness*, and I went and found Sulieman because I needed someone who could complement me in rhyme. Umar quit for the third album, *Chastisement*, and then he came back and rejoined the group and we made *At Last* in 1974. Umar had already been in conflict with me, and then he got into conflict with Sulieman because it was difficult to blend poet personalities. What happened was, when he came back we were at another stage in the art form in its development, because each record became a milestone. We were able to look at each record and say, 'Okay, we did that the last time, now what can we do to improve on that?,' After Umar left in '74 that left me and Sulieman, so we recorded *Delights of the Garden* in '75.

■ ***How did your solo record,* Hustlers Convention, *come about? With the Last Poets, it was always the different poets speaking from their own point-of-view, whereas* Hustlers Convention *was narrated by the***

continued

UMAR BIN HASSAN

■ ***MOTORBOOTY: What was it like for you growing up in Ohio?***

■ UMAR: I was born in Akron. My father was a journeyman musician. He could read and write music, and that was really good, because people would come to him to have him teach them how to play the trumpet, so he was somewhat known in the town. He went through some changes. Not only was he an artist, but he was a black man in the '50's, trying to be different: living in the projects, growing his hair long, wearing an Afro. People would ask me, 'What's wrong with your daddy, why doesn't he get his hair cut? Is he one of those African slaves or something like that?' At that time I didn't understand what he was about or what he was going through; now that I'm an artist myself I understand and I wish I could go back and clear up some of the misunderstandings we had, but I can't because he died in 1990 of an aneurism. He had succumbed to alcoholism and he dropped dead one day in the street. That's part of my history, the thing that made me realize that being black and being sensitive and intelligent in America can sometimes cause you a lot of pain. I remember when I was a little boy, my father used to tell me, 'Learn how to be by yourself.' I always thought that he was antisocial, but I didn't yet understand that when you're a black man in America, and you're being intelligent and creative, a lot of people aren't going to believe that that's you, because you're supposed to be scowling and growling and snarling all the time—you're supposed to be an animal. If you're really going to make a contribution to humanity and uplift people's consciences, there's going to be some impediments put in your way, because you're not supposed to do that. It's pretty rough, man, and there's a lot of sacrifices you have to make, but you also have to make a decision not to let your art and sensitivity overwhelm you. A lot of my contemporaries are gone because certain things overwhelmed their sensitivities. I'm talking about David Ruffin and Marvin Gaye and Huey Newton. You don't want to leave like that, just kind of dying in the streets.

■ ***With your father being a jazz musician, was your upbringing much different from***

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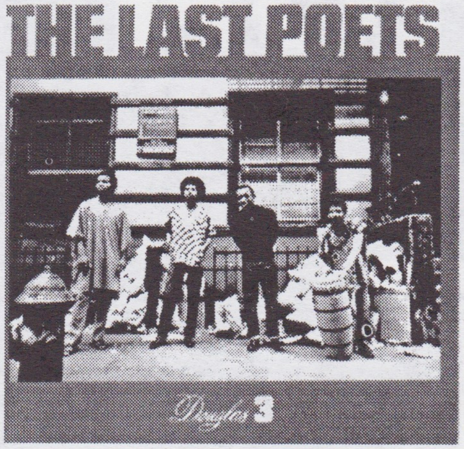
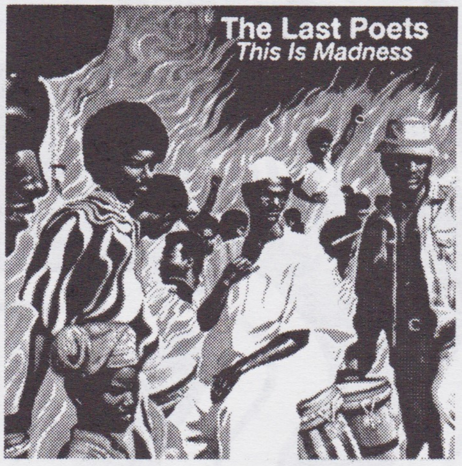




The good Last Poets records

David wanted to see an army of Last Poets all over the world, of all different languages, using poetry as a means to change, to get the foot of the oppressor off our necks. He knew that just three of us couldn't do much in the entire world, but if we influenced others to do this, fine. The idea of the spoken word having prominence on the planet and making sense politically was the goal.

David was also the one who named the group. It came from a poem by a South African poet named Kgostile (who most people call "Little Willie" because they couldn't pronounce his first name) entitled "Toward a Walk in the Sun," which said that the age of writing and art talk is over and the next age will be one of bullets and arrows, where "the only poem you will hear will be the spearpoint pivoted in the punctured marrow of the villain." The poem ended with the line "therefore, we are the last poets of the world." By calling ourselves the Last Poets we were saying, "You hear us, you are hearing what is possibly the last message before the armageddon, before the revolution, before all hell breaks loose, so if you can get this final warning, maybe you can save yourself. If not, you may be consumed by what's coming." A lot of people thought that we were just being cute; they'd say "Oh the Last Poets, there ain't no more poets after you guys, huh, you're the only ones?" It's kind of arrogant, because it's a definitive name. I've listened to names of all these groups that exist today, and not one single name, Public Enemy, N.W.A, none of the names can touch the content or the substance of the title Last Poets. It's a statement culturally, and politically it's got everything and it's just so bold and brave as well. I didn't know how important it was when I was a kid. Like my son told me, 'You never know that you're creating history when you're creating it.'

■ ***Why was David the first to leave?***

■ He was in the doctoral program in psychology at Columbia University and they had a field trip. We would have performances at our loft every weekend, and on this particular weekend, when David decided to go on his field trip, Sun Ra's Arkestra was gonna be there, along with LeRoi Jones (who is now Amiri Baraka) and his Spirit House Movers and Players. We're talking about a major hit, this was a major hit. Just talking about it now blows my mind. Tickets were sold out; if you didn't get a ticket to this, you would stand outside and listen. David said he had to go, he couldn't be there Friday and Saturday but he'd be back Sunday. Kain said, 'If you can't be here on Friday and Saturday, don't come on Sunday.' So Felipe Luciano was waiting in the wings. He didn't have any poetry, he just did background, but then he was officially in the group and David was gone, although I think David still felt in his heart that he was a Last Poet and really didn't begrudge Felipe's introduction into the group. David didn't care who was in the Last Poets, just so long as it existed. Then when Kain left, Umar showed up. Umar was a security guard at one of our concerts in Ohio, and he insisted on frisking me so I called him on it over the mic. He didn't take kindly to that, but he was so infatuated with our performance that he packed his bag and followed us. Felipe left shortly after Kain, because he found other aspirations when things got heavy politically. So I put in Jalal.

■ ***Where did he come from?***

■ Jalal came from the Domestic Peace Corps. He was doing odd jobs, little anti-poverty program jobs. I would see Jalal (who was Larry when I first met him) and he was a pain in my butt in a sense because every time he saw me he'd want to share another rhyme poem. Everything he did was rhyme, he never did it straight. It used to bug us because we were almost anti-rhyme. But I thought it was fascinating that he could take any subject and rhyme about it, and it would come so easily. I thought he was a genius and asked him to join.

After we recorded the first album, I left. I was fed up. I had seen the group change, metamorphose, and I really felt that I was faking the funk in many ways. What in the world is revolutionary about going home and writing a poem, and getting up on stage and doing it and getting paid money and getting on a plane or train or whatever and doing it all over the country? To me it became very trite; I was just faking it. I hadn't picked up a gun, I hadn't shot anyone, I hadn't hurt anyone, I wasn't doing anything. I had a thirst for real revolutionary activity and I really didn't care to perform with the Last Poets because with the advent of Jalal, it seemed more like we were becoming celebrities instead of revolutionaries. We were having a conversation one day and Jalal said, "We're almost like Miles Davis" and I almost punched him in the mouth. Miles is a fucking celebrity. That wasn't what we had done this for, we had done this to make changes. I went down to North Carolina and started an African society called the Yoruba Society at Shaw University to offset the "Greek" fraternities and sororities; I challenged them. I'd bring in my drummers and dancers and wipe them out, we were too loud and colorful for them. One student challenged me and said,'The cultural revolution is cool, but that won't matter if they come with guns and kill your wife?' I said, 'Any fool can get guns,' and I took his challenge and ended up setting up a robbery where we stole some guns from some hardware stores. We got away with that, except that two of my boys went back to retrieve a bundle of guns they had dropped and got busted. Then I took some money from some good old boys to get my boys out of jail, but I ended up going to jail and getting twelve to twenty years in the state penitentiary of North Carolina, of which I served three years and nine months. It was probably the best three years of my life because I learned how to see the big picture clearly. People think that must have been terrible, but I can count the days that were terrible. I wrote two books, short stories, poems, plays, essays, songs, a lot of that stuff. The two institutions I go to now when I visit North Carolina are the prison and Shaw University, because I got my education at both places.

■ ***I read somewhere that the people you had taken the money from were in the Klan?***

■ They were the Klan; I knew who I was hitting. I got my information from a young white kid at North Carolina State University who was a member of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), a group of radical whites. I try to look at it as an adventure, but I don't try to get into the details because it was that deep. It was a hellraising experience that I would never want to repeat because I'm not a tough guy, and when I pointed the gun in the guy's face and said, "Do you know what this

means?" I was scared to death. If he could've just seen the inside of me and how scared I was, he would've just said, "Get out of here." He could've snatched the gun out of my hand, and I would've been gone. But I had this image to live up to. I wanted revolution and I wanted to confront the problem.

■ ***So you were in prison when the first record came out?***

■ Yeah. I was a ghost. People were coming in prison quoting lines from the record—"Run, Nigger," was used a lot. It was very strange to hear people talking your stuff and you can't tell them. I was afraid that if anyone knew, it would be cause for some extra ill treatment by the guards.

I can't say I had a typical prison experience. I had a good prison experience. The prison guard would put my mail under my pillow; I didn't have to wait in line. If someone didn't get mail, we'd be like, I guess Jody got your girl—Jody being that phantom guy that's hot for your lady while you're locked up. All I had to do was look under my pillow. My wife was good, until I cut her off.

I realized that there was no army in prison that I was going to get together. I knew that there were guys in there that kind of voluntarily walked in there. As sad as it may be, there are people who would rather be there because they don't have to pay child support in prison. They can get along in there; prison doesn't stop people from having some sort of superficial life, as superficial as people who live in rich houses. I felt like I was writing myself into being like the "Birdman of Alcatraz," who got so involved with his birds that the outside world was nothing to him. I didn't want to get like Albert Camus, whose best writings were done in prison; every time they let him go, he got put back in. I started planning what I wanted to do when I got out. How I dealt with the wall was very simple: the wall does not stop you from seeing the sky. As long as I could see it, I was fine, because it's the same sky over everybody that I loved outside. We're looking at the same sky, so we're not so far away. I never lost faith.

When I got out, I stayed in North Carolina for a minute, because I had a group called ARE (African Revolutionary Ensemble), but nothing ever came of that because our backer befriended Melissa Manchester and decided to put his money into her instead of us. Then I went up to New York and ran into Jalal riding down 125th Street in a red Jaguar. That was deep, because I was walking around, looking for a job, and here's my guy that I left behind in a red Jaguar. So we hooked up, and he put me up at his house in Cambria Heights and gave me a classic example of his silliness. He asked me what I had been doing in prison, and I said, "a lot of reading, a lot of writing, and chess." So he asked if I wanted to play a game, and pulled out these chess pieces, and they were all Islamic chess pieces: Islamic priests, women in veils, it was really quite pretty. He said, "This is my religion against your religion." I couldn't believe he said that. First of all, you never challenge someone who just came out of prison to a game of chess, 'cause I've been playing chess like you've been drinking water: I'm ready to play Bobby Fischer. Then he's going to try to demean my religion because he's a Muslim. Anyway, to make a long story short, he got his ass whipped miserably. So I went out and I started to teach. My first real job was at Columbia University.

■ ***What year was this?***

■ 1977. I put on a couple plays and got into my jazz group, Griot. But jazz musicians aren't normal people, they've got problems. So that broke up after awhile.

■ ***Did you like the direction the Poets went in after you left?***

■ I liked *Chastisement*. I tend to like much of what Jalal did, he was writing and reciting well. Unfortunately, he can't do either anymore, which is a sad story; his voice is gone and his writing has gotten weak. The only reason that Umar and I can still do what we're doing is because we still have our voices.

■ ***Had you heard Jalal's solo record?***

■ I heard it long before it was recorded; I know all of his pieces just from having heard them a million times before he ever put them on wax. I know that he didn't even write half the stuff, it was all traditional stuff passed on. He tried to portray different characters, and I think that it was a good attempt. I don't think that you can consider that stuff serious; it's just a big cartoon. It's basically what you hear with rappers. It might be interesting to see it done in animation, but I wouldn't want to see Eddie Murphy playing any of the characters.

The first time I started getting back into this Last Poets thing was 1990, when a brother from Detroit named Gregory Reed contacted me about getting the original members back together. Kain was in Europe, David was in Denver, Felipe was on TV—next to Bryant Gumbel, no one looks any better than him—and I had maintained contact with David Nelson. Reed flew us all into Detroit and we did a concert at Orchestra Hall. Felipe stayed at the hotel because he forgot his lines and it would have been too embarrassing—the Poets would never come on stage reading off any paper or book. We packed the place, but there would have had to be more money and excitement involved in order for us to stay together and drop what we were doing.

■ ***I saw a show at S.O.B.'s in New York, with Jalal, Sulieman and Umar.***

■ Umar resurfaced and did a couple of things with them, then in '92 he came and knocked on my door again, just like in the beginning, and we started doing shows again. Sulieman and Felipe have performed with us, but Jalal has not been with any of us other than with Sulieman. Those two got together and decided it was detrimental to perform with me because I'm not Muslim.

■ ***How did* Holy Terror, *the new Last Poets album come about?***

■ I did some background for Umar's album, and established a relationship with Bill Laswell. He had worked with four of the Last Poets, so he wanted to put us together and come up with something that no one else in the world had done. But Sulieman and Jalal nixed it; they didn't want anything to do with it. I felt that it was a blessing in disguise when he decided that he just wanted to only use me and Umar, because we were the only ones willing to work together and make it happen. Melle Mel makes a guest appearance on this album, which doesn't make him a Last Poet, but gives the record that generational connection that we need. I think that people will discover that this album is close to the first album in having impact, but you can't predict anything in this music industry; its a flimsy business. I don't take it that serious-

Doon '94

PHOTO: MICHAEL ACKERMAN

ly, which pisses off Umar, 'cause he's living for these recordings. I work as an educator and I like my job, because I know I'm going to get a check; I put in the hours, I know I'm going to get paid.

■ ***What do you think of rap?***

■ Some members of my generation don't like to hear those loud haranguing words and the loud pulsating of the bass beat. If you're listening to something that's smooth and cool and somebody switches the station to Onyx, you can go crazy. It's just mad; they're mad without a reference. They're just being crazy and loud and rough and raunchy, and you know that after a while this is all like an act. I'm not going to listen to rap all day—there's rap that I've got to listen to because I've got a lot of students who are into it, plus I've gotten invited to talk about rap and I've got to know what they're saying. I think that some of Ice Cube's stuff is very good, but I'm not going to go home in the evening and say, "I'll just put Cube on." I'm not putting on the Last Poets in my box either.

We're coming to a point now where if you're going to be loud and rowdy and upset the atmosphere, you better do it with something to say. I think that hip-hop is going to have to re-examine itself, because fun and games, violent lyrics, and the lewd type of X-rated behavior expressed in lyrics, that stuff is going to go, because folks are going to move against that. Changes are going to be made. I think the revolution is happening. I think that it will happen in terms of cultural and mental and political things; changes will take place. I'm not talking about painting the White House black, like George Clinton said, I'm just talking about taking the powers that we have within our community and saving our own people for a change. Unfortunately, I think that there will be some bloodshed too, because many of us are geared towards bloodshed. Some of us won't rest until we take some things to the street. I know that. I'm not one of those guys; that's not where I'm coming from. I know now that my real weapon is my words, my poetry.

■ ***Do you think that rap or hip-hop will play a part in the changes you mention?***

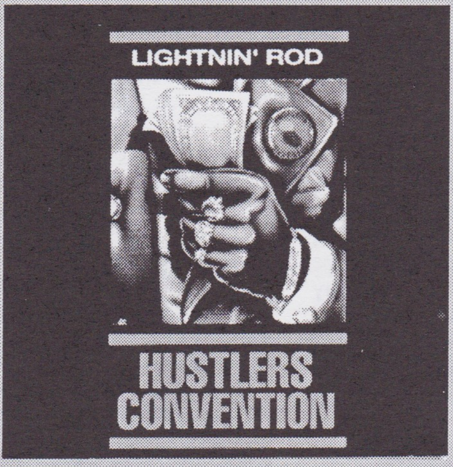
■ Definitely, but if we don't get rappers saying something positive, then what we've got is something negative that's dragging us down and causing conflict and mayhem. That's one of the reasons why the Last Poets are doing what we're doing, because we get enough respect that we can speak to those brothers in a way that they understand. I know for a fact that there's some young brothers and sisters that aren't even dealing with hip-hop, they're dealing with poetry and they're getting praise from their peers; this is the beginning of it. We've got a lot of clowns in this country, black and white, like Ted Danson and Whoopi Goldberg, and a lot of people are going to be clowns no matter what the Last Poets say. I expect the clowns to always emerge and do their number, and I expect the serious people to also emerge and do theirs, and that's the crew we're trying to help develop. ■

JALAL NURIDDIN (cont'd)

character Sport, going back in time to 1959.

■ I work individually and collectively. In a collective framework you must harmonize, therefore I don't do any leads, I do complementing. When I don't have to work within the framework, anything goes. Sort of like Michael Jordan—we know he's the star of the team, but the Chicago Bulls win the championship within the team framework. So, when I'm on my own I get a chance to dunk, and I like to dunk.

My roots were in toasting. That's why I could rap before I could write. I knew "Signifying Monkey," "Doriella Du Fontaine," "Death Row," and all of that shit, because I'd be in and out of the joint. That's where you've got time to put all that shit together, trade that shit off, and be part of Afro-American folklore. *Hustlers Convention* came out because I needed to articulate what was happening on the street and point out that all that glitters is not gold, so that the impoverished black American youth would be able to dig the truth about their hustler role models: 'Okay, he got his Cadillac and his ring on his finger today, but where is he tomorrow in the course of the hustle?' There was a whole hustling cadre who were on the outside looking in, neither going to school nor working. Their job was to make a living off those who were making a living. *Hustlers Convention* was about that particular segment of the black community and why they had to hustle in the first place. I assembled a cast of characters so they could all kick it and compete and rap and talk about their various hustles and boast a toast, until the end, when the real hustlers are semi-identified and Sport says he learned the whole truth while he was in, that the real hustlers are ripping off billions from the unsuspecting millions who are programmed to think they can win.



The first record by Lightnin' Rod, not to be confused with the white supremacist group of the same name

■ ***Do you think that the message that you were conveying got through? It seems like a lot of gangsta rappers glorify the hustler character but fail to include that critique.***

■ No man, they missed it. They missed it entirely. Dig this: if I could have just written that last verse and they could have got the message, that's all I would have written. I had to write a whole story to give it an impetus and explanation on the whys and the wherefores and the how-comes and the whenevers.

Kool and the Gang were on the record, and their record company brought a lawsuit against United Artists for five mil, so the record was taken off the market and it sold as a collector's item for the next 22 years. The album cover won an award, but I got the doublecross. I was going to make a movie of it, but then *The Sting* came out.

■ ***What was the response to* Hustlers Convention, *coming on the heels of what the Last Poets had been doing?***

■ Phenomenal. Man, that was the hippest record you could get. Whoever was hip to *Hustlers Convention* was considered hip.

■ ***How did you hook up with Jimi Hendrix to cut "Doriella Du Fontaine"?***

■ I met Hendrix through Alan Douglas, who was supposedly "helping" Jimi at the time, although it was more like Douglas was just helping himself as opposed to helping Jimi. Jimi was giving me maximum respect, to the point of doing radio plugs for the first Last Poets album. So we got together for a minute and we jammed—me, him, and Buddy Miles.

■ ***What was it like working with Hendrix?***

■ It was fantastic 'cause Jimi was a free-spirited individual. You could see he was into his thing when he was doing it. But when he wasn't doing his thing, he seemed to have some inner sadness. He gave me the impression that he wanted to get out of that bag for a minute and sit down and rap with me, but Douglas never allowed it. He always managed to make sure that Jimi and I couldn't hang out. He didn't want me to exert any more influence on Jimi than what I already had.

■ ***How did you hook up with John Singleton to appear in* Poetic Justice?**

■ He decided, since it's poetry, let's include the Last Poets, it's only fair that they should be heard. So he got the first album and he decided that he wanted to hear "Niggers Are Scared of Revolution." That meant we had to go look for Umar, whom we hadn't heard from in approximately 18 years. We didn't even know whether he was alive or dead at that point, but we put out a wire for him and we found him. He had been steeped deep in the Duña. The Duña is this world's life, you know, street life. Anyway, he came out and he hooked up with us and we did that film.

Then Bill Laswell offered us some studio time. We started work on a new record, but before it was finished Laswell called and said

'I'm making a record with Umar.' I said 'Well, what about our record?' And he said, 'Well, it ain't happenin,' I like Umar's material better. Maybe I'll make a separate record with you guys.' I said, 'Hey man, no man, that's not cool. I'm not happenin' with that. As far as I'm concerned that's a cross.'

■ ***You had worked with Laswell previously, on* Oh My People.**

■ We did *Oh My People* with Laswell because nobody else wanted to make a record with us. It wasn't like we were in demand or anything. The people who were in rap at that time, in the late '70s, early '80s, they were just waking up to who the Last Poets were. They didn't even know.

Then Jean Karakos formed a label called Celluloid in New York after rippin' off people in France, and he used Laswell as his agent. Laswell offered to make a record with us, just so he could say he produced the Last Poets. That was *Oh My People*. The record got bad reviews on its music. As usual, our lyrics were excellent, but Laswell went into his rocket ship and he did that Herbie Hancock shit, tried to hip-hop the record and shit and it didn't work.

■ ***You ended up putting out more records on Celluloid after that, like* Freedom Express.**

■ Yeah, we made a deal with Celluloid to put out some of our records for distribution in the U.S., and Karakos managed to take control of our back catalog, but he never paid us anything. Then he went to Brazil, fucked up that group Lambada, made a fortune off of them, built him a mansion, and now he's hiding.

■ ***So Celluloid put out* The Last Poets, This Is Madness, Chastisement, Hustlers Convention, *and* Delights of the Garden*?***

■ Yeah, they reissued all those records. Celluloid made many licensing deals with many companies and ripped them all off. So now our Celluloid associate sits at a desk on Hudson Street, man, with a gun in his drawer. Now you call up on the telephone, you get an answering service that says 'Music Group'—they don't even tell you the name of the company no more. The message says, 'If you want publicity dial "1," if you want accounting dial "2," if you want A&R dial "3." It don't matter whether you dial 1, 2, or 3, they tell you the same thing: 'There's nobody here right now, but if you leave your name and number and a message, someone will get back to you.' Right now there's nothing I can do about it, because I'm busy working on future projects. But I'll catch them on the rebound. People used to ask me if I was bitter. I ain't even got time for that. All they're doing is bringing wrath upon themselves, because what's comin' around is goin' around, and what's comin' is catching them. Catching them comes before hanging them.

■ ***What about* Retrofit*?***

■ *Retrofit*? They took the music that was there and they added music to it against our will. So not only are they ripoff artists but they're also artistic vandals. It would be like somebody goes into a museum and there's a famous painting on the wall and they say, 'Well, I think it would look better like this,' and they try to paint over it.

■ ***So they did all the rerecording?***

■ Yeah, right, we had nothing to do with that. It's regrettable and lamentable. They are reprehensible to say the least, and that's a nice word. They are held in contempt, utter contempt, total contempt! And may the wrath of God fall upon their heads and their offspring forever! And may they die the death of a dog! With rabies! So I wish all that upon them, and that's just what I wish.

■ ***What's your opinion on the Last Poets being sampled? I don't know if you're aware of this, but over ten years ago the British band the Pop Group took the vocals from "E Pluribus Unum" and put music behind it. Did you hook up with them on that?***

■ No, no. That was a rip. Ninety-nine percent of those samples are a rip. I only got paid for one sample and that was Digable Planets, and that was chump change.

■ ***Are you happy that the Last Poets, and you specifically because you were the rhyming one, are considered the forefathers of rap? Are you happy with the art form that you've influenced?***

■ Well, I'm not happy with its transmission from generation from generation. Today's rappers didn't get the art form like the jazz musicians got it. For example, Miles played with Bird, Trane played with Miles, Herbie Hancock played with Miles: that's how they were supposed to get it. I got it from the folklore of masters, who were many. They wore dungarees and walked barefoot in the backwoods. I got it from its original source, the first generation, my parents' generation. They came up from the Deep South, so my stuff is authentic 'cause it's folkloric. I saw rap as a political development of the ancient griot in the story-telling tradition: the African tradition matched with the urban contemporary experience. Rappers didn't get it like that. If they didn't learn it from me on a personal level or learn from any one of the other Poets on a personal level, then they didn't learn it properly. The only one that really got anything on that level was Gil Scott-Heron. He's the only one that we dropped some knowledge on, when we did a show while he was a student at Lincoln University. After the show was over we rapped with Gil because he wanted to do something like we were doing, and we gave him all the encouragement he needed to go do his thing.

Jalal '94

PHOTO: PAT BLASHILL

■ ***Are there any rappers that you've liked?***

■ Well, the Lifers Group, because I know they're rappers for real. So they can get my endorsement as far as being a for-real rap group. . . and then I guess Gil. The young rappers know how to rhyme, but idea-wise they lack the experience, so I'm not really impressed with what I'm hearing. From time to time, somebody among them says something that I can say, 'Yeah, yeah, he's on the right course,' because they can learn from hearsay or they can learn from proxy by listening to the records. Each time we put out a record, we're givin' up another lesson.

■ ***What do you think of the recordings that Umar has made? He's touring right now using the name of the Last Poets.***

■ I don't like Umar's record because it's a Bill Laswell production. It's just a record of poetry. You listen to Umar's poetry, you can compare it to some of the things that he's done before and there's not that much of a difference. Laswell produced it, trying to capitalize on his nostalgia for the original Last Poets sound, but he don't even know what it was about. He wasn't there when it was happening and he don't want to let no one tell him, so he

Lookin' good circa '73: Jalal, Sulieman, Nilaja

produced his own sound as a vehicle for Umar so Umar can capitalize on being a past poet by saying he's a Last Poet. In the story of the Last Poets, those who were able to last for the duration actually became the Last Poets, and those that dropped out became the past poets who were Last Poets. That's what went down, that's the facts. And Kain, David, and all of them before that, well they never even got to the professional level. They went out to do their own careers because as far as they were concerned, they were bad by themselves, but I have yet to see any results of that. I don't have any idea of what became of them all.

We have a new record, *Scatterap*, so the Poets are going on tour. It doesn't matter what Umar and Abiodun and them is doing, because the reality of it is, their repertoire is limited. Plus, man, if they had been correct, they could have learned how to do it from us, but they think they already know, so they can only embarrass themselves 'cause there'll be no one comparable to me and Sulieman after our 25 years of honin' it and tonin' it. We got it down, man, to a flash. We got it down to the butter roll. We got it down home and toned. We got it down. We got it down so tough, man, that if no audience was there, we would still knock our ownselves out. I mean the vocalese has evolved. That's where the development took place. That's where Abiodun and Umar dropped off at, they blew that part.

■ ***Do you think you'll ever get back together and perform or record with Umar or Abiodun or the other Poets?***

■ Highly improbable. They're not up to par, man, they're not on the level that we're at because of all those missed years of development. Now, they just got back, they've been together now for like a year, and they want to undermine me and Sulieman. They don't want to reunite with us, unless it would be for monetary purposes. There are some people who have offered us money to make a record together if we would come together, but the fact of the matter is, they wouldn't be able to—me and Sulieman would out-write them and out-recite them, for the simple fact that we've been doing it long enough. It's not even personal at that level. That's not to say that they're not good poets, but we're the best.

I longed for that rhyme poet to complement me, and God answered my prayers in Sulieman. He had paid all his dues and everything, plus we have similar backgrounds. I'm from the ghetto in New York City, Sulieman's from the ghetto in Philadelphia. But Umar's from Akron, Ohio. He's from the Midwest, so he's got a different way of thinking. Abiodun comes from a pseudo-middle class background out in Queens. He was in college. He didn't have any ghetto. He moved to the ghetto so he could get the experience—what it's like to grow up in the ghetto. You got to get it from the ground up.

■ ***I haven't heard anything about your own background. Where were you raised?***

■ I'm from Fort Greene, in Brooklyn. Fort Greene Projects, man. I used to gang-bang with the Chaplains back in the '50's. They were one of the biggest gangs in Brooklyn. Back then it was the Chaplains, the Bishops, the Corefield Lords, the Buccaneers, the Jolly Stompers, the El Covans, all them groups, all of them gangs. We controlled Brooklyn. We were the baddest. Then the governor dug that, so he let the Mafia drop heroin in the community. He said, 'Hey man, we have to destroy that unity, 'cause they've got it going, boy.' So that's what they did.

■ ***You mentioned that Abiodun was going to college. Did you go to college as well?***

■ No, man. I'm an elementary school kick-out. Yeah, I got kicked out in the fourth grade, man, 'cause I questioned the teaching. So I never finished elementary school, I never finished high school. Later on, I educated myself, and I took the test and I got a high school equivalency diploma, for whatever that was worth.

■ ***On the early Last Poets albums your name was Alafia Pudim.***

■ Yep. Well, I was constantly making evolutions. Constantly defining and redefining so I could get it down to a fine-tooth comb. Because a lot was lost and had to be replaced, as a result of the legacy of slavery. The legacy of slavery is deep. I think it's irreparable. It's on America as a whole, not just on black America. It's on the white man too.

■ ***Speaking of names, what distinction do you make when you release a record under the name "Lightnin' Rod" or you release it under the name Jalal?***

■ When I'm "Lightnin' Rod," I go into my griot identity and I psychically link up with my past. So, "Lightnin' Rod" is the consummate story-teller linked up with his ancient counterpart the griot, only he's now in urban contemporary America telling the story, almost sort of like an Uncle Remus but not on that vibe. So "Lightnin' Rod" basically means my mind be like the rod, and the Creator be giving inspiration like lightning. That's what's happening.

■ ***I know that audiences had a real positive reaction to your music in the early '70s. Was there a negative reaction with the authorities?***

■ Well, yeah. I had some hassles that were life-threatening. The L.A.P.D. tried to do us, man. They tried to killing us for failure to make a left turn, that's what it was for.

■ ***So what ended up happening?***

■ We were in a situation where they pulled us over into an abandoned gas station at the end of Santa Monica Boulevard after midnight returning from having delivered *Chastisement* to the record company out in L.A. They were out to do us. One cat looked like Lee Trevino and the other cat looked like he had just come in from Ireland—freckles and red hair. He looked like a grown-up Dennis the Menace. They were trying to do us because we were questioning their questions. I said, 'Alright, look, man, write us out our ticket and let us go, man. We ain't buyin' no drugs, no guns, we ain't doin' nothin.' We're straight. Ain't nothin' wrong with us, so what's your problem?' 'Well, you cats, you from back east, you're Muslims, and we have a war on

against Muslims. Governor Reagan, he says we have to be prepared.' That's what was going on at the time. One of the policemen assumed the posture of a sergeant in the military, so I wondered whether or not he was a veteran. I asked him, 'Excuse me, officer, have you been in the army before?' He said, 'Yeah, I've been in the army. I used to be in the military police. Why do you ask?,' and I said, 'Cause I'm a veteran myself. I'm an ex-paratrooper.' So he had to give me some veteran's respect and that changed the situation, but they still wanted to do us, 'cause the Irish-lookin' dude had taken his cap and he turned it backwards like a baseball cap, and the other guy had his hand on his piece with the strap off, and the other cat had this billy-club flashlight that he was smackin' in his hand. Then a sergeant came over, a supervisor, and he said 'What you got these guys for?' They told him and he said, 'Well, then, write them up and let them go.' So they had to let us go. They said they were putting our names on a subversive activities list because they were at war against Muslims.

■ ***Whatever happened to the "revolution"?***

■ I don't think there will be a revolution. I think if push comes to shove there may be an insurrection. In fact, let's talk potential civil war. That's the potential for America right now, the way things are shaping up.

■ ***Do you see that more as a black versus white conflict, or one of rich versus poor?***

■ I don't think it's going to be so much black versus white, although there'll be elements of that. I think it will be poor versus rich, working class versus bureaucratic class, military versus local authorities, intelligence agencies versus intelligence agencies. I think history will repeat itself, and that's a shame, but that's what they're bringing on themselves. If you ain't giving the people no love, you're giving the people a hard way to go. If you don't look out for the people you ain't got nothing. It's as plain and simple as that. If they wanna hold it against black people for suffering from the legacy of slavery, then they're wrong-minded. They can't hold it against black people for their situation. What they should be doing is trying to alleviate that situation, because black people are in no position to do to them what they did to black people, nor is the American Indian in a position to do that. That's the reality of it. The paranoia of it is, 'Oh shit! If they ever get power they're gonna turn around and put us on the plantation, and we're gonna be picking cotton!' Shit, come on. Be for real. We've gotta save the planet and shit, and you can't even begin starting to do that until you've started saving the people. That's the job of the poet: to point out not just the problem but the solution. I'm a half a century in this penitentiary. The first 25 years I spent identifying the problem; the second 25 years I spent coming up with the solutions. ■

The Last Poets live '94 (Abiodun, Don Babatunde Eaton, and Umar)

PHOTO: MICHAEL ACKERMAN

UMAR BIN HASSAN (cont'd)

the kids you grew up around?

■ First of all, my family was, as they say now, dysfunctional. I hate using that word because it makes it sound like there was no function. There was function, there just wasn't any discipline. There was so much rage and bitterness and frustration going on that the family went through moments of disarray. I wanted to be a neurosurgeon, because at that time there was a television show on called *Ben Casey*, and I liked the fact that every day they were going inside folks' heads with little scalpels and pulling out the tiniest veins. That was some heavy shit to me. But the welfare check didn't stretch very far, so I began to give up a lot of my childhood in order to help the family get over the hump. Most of my time as a child was spent in the street. I didn't even go to school because I was working with my shoeshine box, and I began to lose my vision of becoming a doctor. My whole world became the street: how to relate to women, how to relate to men, what the whores would tell me about the pimps, what the pimps would tell me about the whores—that whole street thing became inculcated into my psyche and into my lifestyle. You start getting these concepts about how to survive and how to live, and some of them have nothing to do with survival or about being a man. As you grow up and it becomes time for you to really be caring or sensitive, you're so used to treating people like this that it fucks up a lot of relationships with people who really care for you.

■ ***How long did you stay in Ohio?***

■ 'Til I was 19. I hated high school. There was nothing teaching me about myself, about black people. The only time I learned anything about myself was from history books about black people, and we had very few of those in the '50s and '60s. I always managed to find one, but way back, on the last shelf, in the last aisle of the library. It helped out a lot in the classroom, because sometimes racist teachers would espouse their ideology and I would be able to raise my hand and say, 'Hey, I know that's a lie,' and I could squash that. They'd say, 'Watch out for Jerome Huling'—that was my name at that time—because they knew that once they started their bullshit I was going to zap them. I wasn't mad at them, but I was mad at the other black brothers and sisters in the class who had no knowledge of who they were or where they came from, and who would just sit there and take the insinuations and knocks on their race. I just wanted to make them realize that Tarzan is not king of the fucking jungle, he was never the king of the fucking jungle, and he never will be the king of the fucking jungle.

I used to tell everybody, 'All I do is play football, run track, and get pussy. That's what I go to school for.' That was my thing. I forced myself to graduate because I was going to be the first one in my family. I graduated with two 'C's, two 'D's, and an 'F'. Actually, they just wanted to get me the fuck out of their school, because I was having "Black Power" rallies at basketball practice. I would just walk out of school sometimes. They'd say 'Where do you think you're going, Mr. Huling?,' and I would just say 'I'm going home, I'm tired of this shit,' and not come back til the next day. Being a football star you could get away with a lot. All you jocks who play football and basketball know what I'm talking about.

■ ***When did you come across the Last Poets?***

■ I was chief of security at this black arts festival at Antioch College. Abiodun, who was the first Last Poet I met, came through the security

line. He was telling me he was from the Last Poets and he was from New York City and he was one of the entertainers at the show, but I said, 'Listen, homey, my job is to check everyone who comes through here. You either check in or you check out.' He saw that I was serious, so even though he was grumbling he got checked. Later on, he dissed me from the stage, saying 'Who's that crazy Mau Mau Negro out there checking people, man? What's the matter with him? That boy act like he's crazy.' So I was like, 'Oh wow, homey got some game, he's gonna dis me from the stage.' But later, when Doon and Kain and Luciano and Nilaja did what they did onstage, it blew my head up. That's when I realized what I wanted to do: I wanted to be a Last Poet. Doon told me that if I ever wanted to I could come and hang out at their East Wind Loft in Harlem, so six months later I found myself making my way to New York City looking for the Last Poets. At that time, just Abiodun and Nilaja were left. Felipe was in school, Gylan left because he and Doon couldn't get along, and David was working with a black organization that was making dashikis. I didn't become a Last Poet automatically. One night Doon was giving a show, and he said 'There's a brother from Ohio here, and he wants to be a Last Poet. We're gonna let y'all decide if he can.' I got up and did something called the 'Motherfucker Poem'; it was crude, but people could feel my passion, so they clapped and said, 'Yeah, he should be a Last Poet.' The rest was history.

■ ***Was there any particular reason you left Ohio, or was it just to become a Last Poet?***

■ Akron at the time I left was a reactionary town, "the rubber capital of the world." If you had any talent or imagination, you had to stifle it. People said I had instigated a little riot; I played a little part in that, but I didn't play a big part. It was well known that Jerome Huling was a motherfucker willing to instigate that kind of shit, so it was made known to me that it was time for me to get out of there. A month after the riot, the Akron police department sent a letter to my house, asking me to come in and be recruited as an Akron policeman. My mother, knowing the town and knowing me, said 'What the fuck is this? It's time for you to get out of here. They'll get you down there, in one of their little motherfucking rooms, and some kind of "accident" is going to happen to you. You gotta go.' So I did. Within a year, my album was back in Akron, and I was a hero. My mother's there, so I can go there and chill out now, but for a long time I didn't like my hometown.

■ ***You mentioned once that one of the things about Malcolm X that you found most interesting was that he was a Midwesterner.***

■ I'm ready to get back to the Midwest, it's nice and quiet. I was born in Ohio and I lived in Detroit and Flint for awhile. I liked Flint, it was real quiet and the people were nice. Hardworking people. Very country, very honest. New Yorkers are basically phony. They like playing games. New York is one of the most racist cities around. Mostly everybody that comes to New York and does something substantial is from someplace else, like the Midwest.

■ ***Did the Last Poets play in Detroit?***

■ Yeah. I took this young girl out of the club with me, and her daddy came looking for me with a shotgun the next day.

■ ***What was the response?***

■ We was real. They loved us. That's the thing about the Midwest; you cannot fake the funk in the Midwest. More than any place in the world, you better be real, because if you're bullshitting you're going to be in trouble. First of all, those people work hard and they play hard. When they come into a club to hear you, they don't want to hear no bullshit; you'll wind up being shot at or stabbed or something. Detroit was like Cleveland, and that was my part of the world. They may not be as progressive as the East Coast, but they understood "Niggers Are Scared of Revolution." We were received really well in Detroit. As a matter of fact, Detroit has always been one of my favorite cities. I've been in and around New York for about 25 years, but basically I'm a Midwesterner at heart, and I always will be. You learn how to share and how to speak to people, and sometimes you forget that. I almost forgot that. I almost became a New Yorker, but I caught myself just in time

■ ***Besides the Poets, what kind of things went on at the East Wind Loft?***

■ We had Don and Albert Ayler, Milford Graves, Pharoah Sanders, Leon Thomas, Don Cherry, all the vanguards; people who understood that what they were playing was black and revolutionary. Plus, we had dancers, and political workshops; Rap Brown, Assata Shakur, and the Young Lords were there. We had benefits for the Panthers. We gave Jimmy Walker his start at the East Wind. At that time the funny thing about Jimmy wasn't his jokes; they were not funny. It was the way he looked; when Jimmy would come up on stage, people would start laughing. We treated everybody the same. Everybody could come and use the loft for benefits, but we didn't have no political ties. There were people who tried to recruit us, like the Nation of Islam, but we backed off of that. 'We're doing quite well by ourselves, thank you very much.' The East Wind was an oasis for people in the Harlem community to get into their heritage. It was a beautiful thing and it was a beautiful time. Then COINTELPRO came through, and everyone started snitching on each other; the ones that COINTELPRO didn't get, the drugs got, myself included.

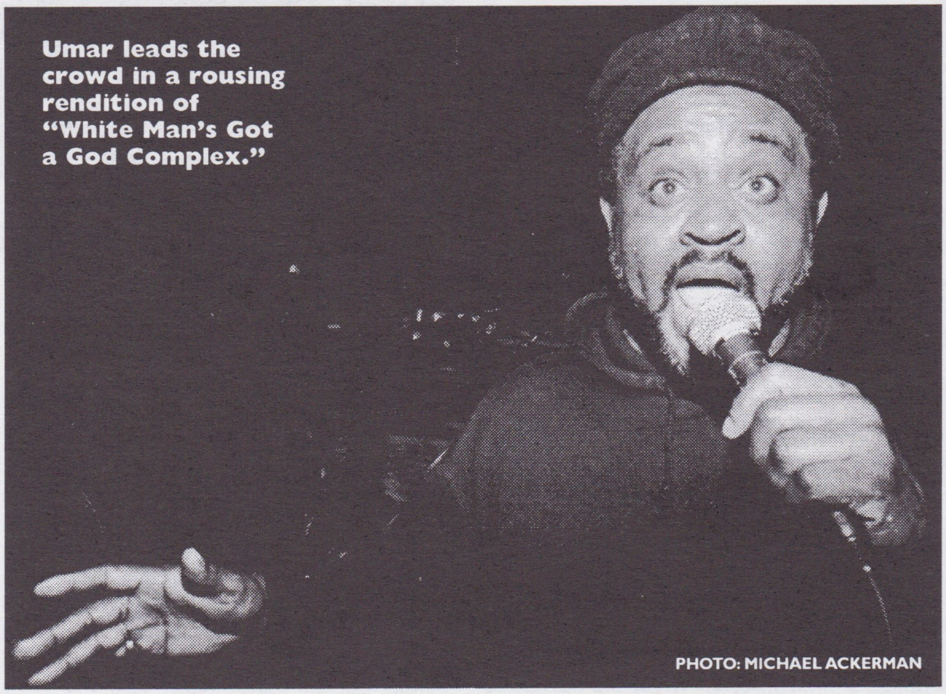
I met my own agent when we were in Denver, Colorado. She was this young sister that they sentto follow me. I bedded her down, and after I bedded her down and gave her a real country fucking, she told me who she was. I was getting ready to leave, and she said 'Where are you going?' I said, 'New York,' and she said, 'The only place you're going is back up in me.'

■ ***She was an FBI agent?***

■ She didn't tell me who she was working for. She was crying when she told me: 'I was sent by some people to try and get some information out of you.' The next time I saw her, about two months later, she was in Harlem wearing a headpiece and a long dress. I wondered, 'What is she doing here? Is she snooping on some of the groups in Harlem?' So I confronted her. She said, 'Umar! I've been looking for you!' She had changed; she had really changed and was into the black thing. It made me feel good. I thought I had the best dick in the world.

■ ***What was the deal with the soundtrack album to the movie* Right On! *by "the Original Last Poets," Kain, Nelson, and Luciano?***

■ They did that because after they left the group, they felt that they had been slighted because they weren't on the album. At that



Umar leads the crowd in a rousing rendition of "White Man's Got a God Complex."

PHOTO: MICHAEL ACKERMAN

time it was like a turf war. It got to the point where we actually got into some fisticuffs in the street, me and David and Kain and Jalal. We were all young brothers, young turks, and since we had already made our album we said 'Y'all can't do that, that's our name, you left the group.' We got a court order on that, and they stopped using the name. It was silly, but we couldn't understand the bigger picture. Now we understand that anybody who was a Last Poet could do anything they wanted to because they were Last Poets, they have a right to do that.

■ ***Why did you leave?***

■ It was a personal thing I had with a couple of the brothers. I didn't like the way things were happening in the group and where it was going; certain people wanted to take it to a star thing, this Miles Davis cool jazz bullshit, so I left.

■ ***Do you like the stuff that Jalal and Sulieman have done since you left?***

■ To be honest, the quality was down. The Last Poets were always innovators, and I think those guys have gotten lazy. The last one I heard was *Freedom Express*, and I didn't like it at all, and I told them so. There's still some slight feelings between me and them, the fact that they've had the name for the last 20 years, and nobody else has the right to use the name, and that's full of shit. I was a Last Poet before either one of them, and Doon was a Last Poet before me, so if it hadn't been for Doon, I wouldn't have been there, Jalal wouldn't have been there, and Sulieman wouldn't have been there. They think that they can claim the name exclusively, well, nobody can do that.

■ ***Have they given you any problems about* Holy Terror*?***

■ It's gonna be straightened out. It's bullshit, and everyone knows it's bullshit. People know what kind of stuff Jalal's been doing in the name of the Last Poets. I came back from too much to worry about that.

■ ***After the Poets, did you do any other performing before you began your recent comeback?***

■ No. I was performing only in crackhouses. I was getting high and doing poetry. A lot of people knew who I was. People would take a hit off the pipe and say, 'Wait a minute, aren't you one of the Last Poets? What are you doing here?' And I'd say, 'I'm doing the same thing you're doing.' I would get high, go off, and people would give me an ovation. It was still performing. I was keeping my chops sharp. You can't fake the funk in a crackhouse. You've got to give the people what they want, 'cause it can be pretty nasty in there. But no, I wasn't doing any legitimate performing.

I finally quit because cocaine was controlling me. I hate being controlled. I have to be in control, so I made a conscious decision to beat the shit. People didn't understand how I was going about doing it, because I wasn't in NA and I didn't allow myself to go into rehabilitation and I didn't commit myself into an institution to be fucked over by some silly-ass, child-molesting, gorilla-fucking, so-called psychiatrist or psychotherapist, who later on after he talks to you goes home and sucks on some baby gorilla toes and shit. I didn't need that; the power was in me. I've known that ever since I was a little boy. So little by little over the last three or four years, I've been working hard at it, and now I have no desire to smoke cocaine anymore at, and that's really deep, because that crack is one of the most insidious addictions that's ever been known to man. That shit makes you go insane. So you've got to kill that desire. All those rehabilitation programs tell you that you'll always have it, that you're going to be an addict for the rest of your life. Fuck that; I don't want to be no addict for the rest of my life. I'm not going to smoke that shit ever again. My mind is back to me now, and it feels good to be alive again.

Umar Bin Hassan's solo joint

■ ***How was your experience on the set of* Poetic Justice*?***

■ Good. Columbia wanted to get somebody else to lip-synch for us, but John Singleton said, 'No, I want the real cats,' so he got us. It was nice to meet John, and Janet Jackson, although we didn't get along too well with Tupac. Fuck Tupac. I think he fell into this trip where he actually believes he's a gangster. He shot those boys down in Atlanta, and got away with it, he said it was self defense. But when he walked out of the courtroom, like 'I'm the baddest motherfucker,' I knew they were going to get him, I knew they were going to set him up. The next thing I know they got him. They're going to put him away. You wanna be a real gangster, and you wanna do some stupid gangster shit, you gotta do some gangster time, motherfucker. Tupac is a little bitch, man, and he's gonna do some bitch time too. I hope when he comes out he's still a man, because the boys in there are in some real deep places; when they see you're a bitch, they don't care who the fuck you were on the outside, you might be Miss Tupac Shakur on the inside.

■ ***Are you happy being considered one of the forefathers of rap?***

■ It's a nice honor. I can't command money or cars or houses for it, but I appreciate it.

■ ***If rap could be considered your "child," how would you instruct it or discipline it?***

■ I would say learn how to grow with your language. Learn how to use your language for what is good and what is right because language is a very powerful thing, and if you don't understand it, it can be turned against you to make you look like a fool. Don't worry about complaints or confusion or the critics. Just keep doing it and you'll get better at it.

■ ***What do you think of today's rappers?***

■ I acknowledge the fact that they're trying to keep the legacy alive, the ones who are doing a positive interpretation. I listen to Grand Master Flash, Melle Mel, Public Enemy. I like Queen Latifah. I did like MC Lyte until she decided to become a roughneck and changed up from the positive stuff. Don't nobody wanna buy no positive shit, so everybody's doing some real stupid shit. It'll all come around again, so why compromise? Stay positive, 'cause sooner or later the positive stuff is gonna win out.

■ ***Why do you think it is that the positive stuff doesn't sell very well?***

■ Because America itself is in a state of acquiescing to mediocrity. The intelligence factor in America is very low right now. It's frightening. The people who are doing unique stuff, the real geniuses, have to sacrifice. If you're serious about what you've done, you've got to stick to your guns, and stay with it, because otherwise you end up with mediocrity and compromise.

■ ***What do you think about gangsta rap?***

■ Gangsta rap glorifies and perpetrates black on black violence. That's why they get so much heat. These so-called gangsta rappers, these

LAST POETS CLIFF'S NOTES

1968: Group consisting of Gylan Kain, David Nelson, and Abiodun Oyewole unites to perform for a Malcolm X birthday celebration at Harlem's Mt. Morris Park.

1969: David "Babyface" Nelson splits from group. Felipe Luciano joins. Kain leaves, as does Luciano. Ohio émigré Umar Bin Hassan joins up with Abiodun. Alafia Pudim (who later changes name to Jalal Nuriddin) joins group as "the rhyming one." Trio, with conga-playing fixture Nilaja, records debut album with Jimi Hendrix vampire Alan Douglas, who also records a Jalal duet with Hendrix. Abiodun leaves group.

1970: *The Last Poets* released. Kain, Nelson, and Luciano form rival group "the Original Last Poets" and star in Herbert Danska's film *Right On!* and subsequent soundtrack album.

1971: Jalal and Umar win rights to Last Poets name and release *This is Madness*. Umar leaves group.

1972: Jalal brings in fellow rhymer Sulieman El-Hadi and releases *Chastisement*.

1973: Under the name "Lightnin' Rod," Jalal records solo effort *Hustlers Convention*, with instrumental backing from Kool and the Gang, Eric Gale, Julius Hemphill, and Billy Preston.

1974: Umar returns for *At Last*, then departs again. Nilaja forced to leave group because of failing health.

1975: Jalal and Sulieman release *Delights of the Garden* with drummer Bernard Purdie.

1980: Nilaja dies of brain tumor.

1985: Jalal and Sulieman hook up with producer Bill Laswell for *Oh My People*.

1990: Kain, Nelson, Luciano, and Abiodun reunite for Detroit performance.

1991: Jalal and Sulieman release *Freedom Express*.

1992: Celluloid releases *Retrofit*, reworked versions of Last Poets songs. For an appearance in John Singleton's film *Poetic Justice*, Jalal and Sulieman reunite with Umar. Umar soon ditches duo.

1993: Umar hooks up with Laswell for solo album *Be Bop or Be Dead*, featuring Bootsy Collins and Bernie Worrell, with Abiodun on backing vocals.

1994: Abiodun and Umar's *Holy Terror* released in Japan, while Jalal and Sulieman's *Scatterap/Home* comes out in France; both are billed as Last Poets records. Confusion reigns.

Those Last Poets, circa 1970

young brothers don't know. They're running around talking about their power and how slick they are, but they're setting themselves up for the kill. I love these brothers because they're young and black and trying to express themselves, but I've been trying to tell them, 'You've got to be cool, because you're making it easy for the stormtroopers to jump through the walls and grab you out of your homes and out of your cars, you're giving them a reason to turn their guns on the rest of us. There's gonna be some of your own kind who ain't gonna make no objections because you've been acting like gangsters on the streets, and folks want to stop ducking the bullets.'

■ ***Where do you think that the younger generation may have gone wrong, since there's so much violence in rap directed inwardly compared to the more positive message that you were putting forth with the Last Poets?***

■ In this society there are certain people who want to see black people at odds with one another, and you have some of those people working in the record industry: 'This shit sells, and we can get rich off this shit.' I think that there are certain people in the record industry who have to be blamed for this saturation of violent and misogynist lyrics. It can be stopped if they wanted it to be. I'm glad that there are some radio stations that take it in their hands to take these CDs out of rotation. It has to stop somewhere.

■ ***How do you distinguish the Last Poets' use of the word 'nigger' with the way that rappers today throw it around?***

■ We used that word to make people become aware of the negative meanings of that word and to make them change for the positive, not to make them believe that they were niggers or that it was a good thing to be a nigger. We were out to use that word to make them look within themselves, not to use it as a term that people would be happy or proud to use.

■ ***Do you think that there will ever be a revolution?***

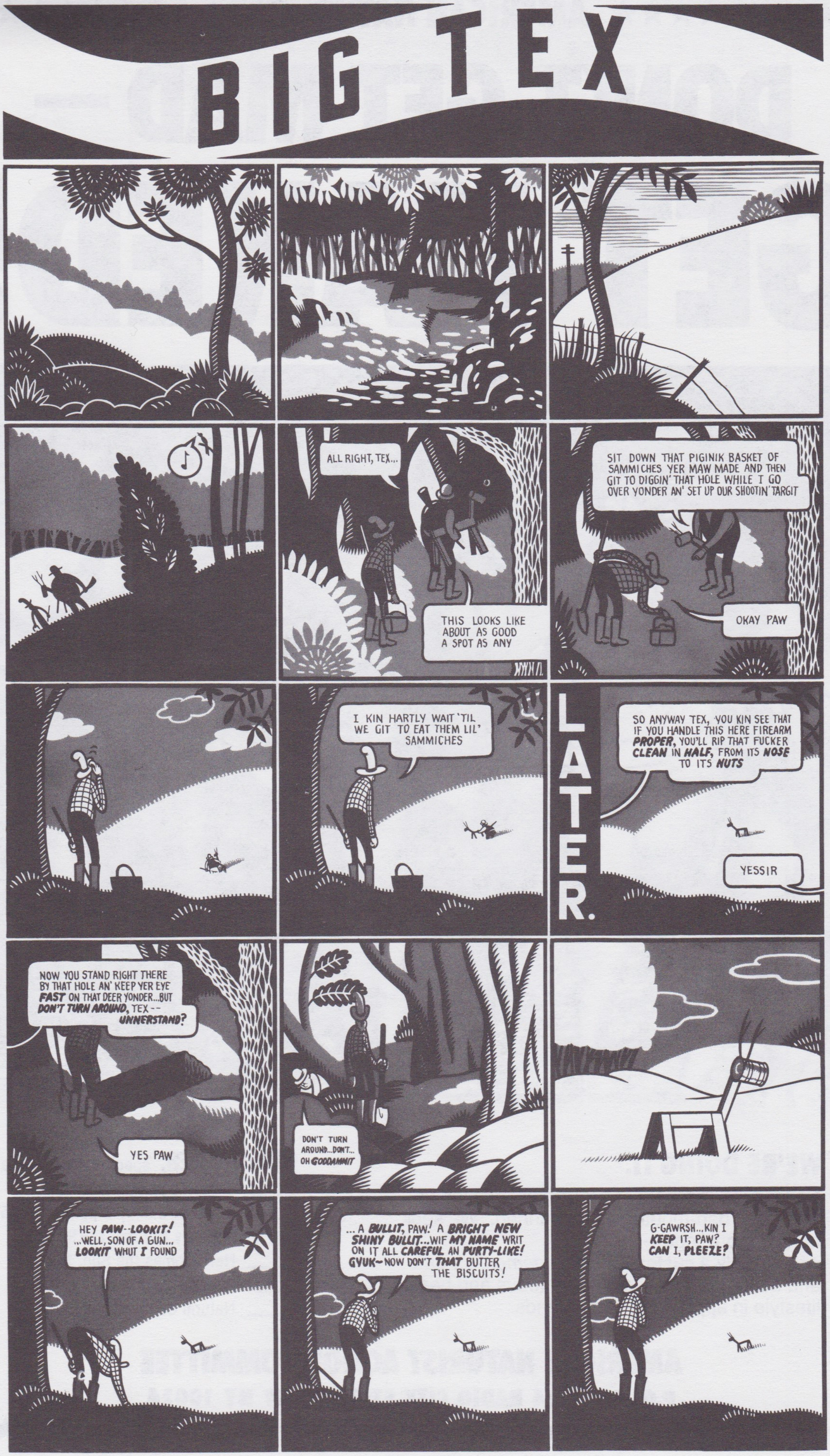
■ Some people think there will be a race war between black people and white people. But I think poor white people will realize who their real enemies are: the big boys, the power boys, the boys who control the army and the CIA. People talk about gangsters like John Dillinger and Pretty Boy Floyd and Ma Barker; they were revolutionaries. They were poor white people who knew, 'Hey, there's a Depression going on, but there are still rich people in this country with millions and millions of dollars. They're taking away our farm, and we ain't gonna go out like this.' So they went to the banks where the money was, to rob the financial institutions. Sooner or later the people in this country are going to have a revolution. I mean, how can you be paying somebody $84 million to play basketball when you say there's no money for housing or food or services? It's a big contradiction when you give all that money to a big strapping black gladiator just for running up and down a court. Larry Johnson, I don't know if you read MOTORBOOTY, but you ain't worth $84 million motherfucker!

■ ***Do you think that if there was a revolution it would be televised?***

■ I don't know. Maybe on Fox; they have all the black situation comedies. You have people here who are hungry. The bottom line in America is money, and everybody believes that it's money that makes you strong, makes you safe, makes you important. But money isn't that much; it's just a little piece of paper. The American Dream is a lie. The system is falling apart, except for entertainment and sports. Keep people satisfied and pacified with entertainment and sports. Everybody else is having a hard time making it.

■ ***Do you think that there is more madness today than when you started?***

■ Much more. It's much more hidden, much more subtle and cosmetic. It might even get worse. We were ahead of our time; people now are just starting to understand. "Niggers Are Scared of Revolution" is more relevant now than it was in 1969, and if this ain't madness, what is? ■


BIG TEX
ALL RIGHT, TEX...
THIS LOOKS LIKE ABOUT AS GOOD A SPOT AS ANY
SIT DOWN THAT PIGINIK BASKET OF SAMMICHES YER MAW MADE AND THEN GIT TO DIGGIN' THAT HOLE WHILE I GO OVER YONDER AN' SET UP OUR SHOOTIN' TARGIT
OKAY PAW
I KIN HARTLY WAIT 'TIL WE GIT TO EAT THEM LIL' SAMMICHES
LATER.
SO ANYWAY TEX, YOU KIN SEE THAT IF YOU HANDLE THIS HERE FIREARM PROPER, YOU'LL RIP THAT FUCKER CLEAN IN HALF, FROM ITS NOSE TO ITS NUTS
YESSIR
NOW YOU STAND RIGHT THERE BY THAT HOLE AN' KEEP YER EYE FAST ON THAT DEER YONDER...BUT DON'T TURN AROUND, TEX-- UNNERSTAND?
YES PAW
DON'T TURN AROUND...DON'T... OH GODDAMMIT
HEY PAW--LOOKIT! ...WELL, SON OF A GUN... LOOKIT WHUT I FOUND
...A BULLIT, PAW! A BRIGHT NEW SHINY BULLIT...WIF MY NAME WRIT ON IT ALL CAREFUL AN PURTY-LIKE! GYUK--NOW DON'T THAT BUTTER THE BISCUITS!
G-GAWRSH...KIN I KEEP IT, PAW? CAN I, PLEEZE?

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I HEAR YA, BRO.
HEY! LET'S SCAM THE CAR AN' GO TO WINDSOR!
OOO! THEY'RE PLAYIN' "STRANGLEHOLD," MAN! CRANK IT!
WHAT'RE YOU LOOKIN' AT, ASSHOLE!
BRIDGE TO CANADA KEEP RIGHT
BRAAP! WE GONNA HAVE SOME FUN TO-NIGHT!
FORD
ALL RIGHT, YOU GUYS- GET READY.
CITIZENSHIP, PLEASE.
FUCK YOU, JACK...
...CANADA SUCKS!
PULL OVER!
OOPS! GUESS I DIDN'T HIDE ANY DOPE IN THE HUBCAPS!
WHAT ABOUT UNDER THE DASH-BOARD?
OR IN THAT SECRET COMPARTMENT IN THE TRUNK?
HA HA! THEY DIDN'T FIND A GODDAMN THING!
STUPID CANADIANS! NOW THEY GOTTA PUT IT BACK TOGETHER!
...AND DON'T EVER COME BACK!
WHO'D WANNA?
POCKETA POCKETA
GODDAMMIT- THE NEIGHBOR KIDS HAVE BEEN PLAYING WITH THE GARDEN GNOMES AGAIN.
HONEY, I JUST STARTED THE CAR AND IT SOUNDS AWFUL!
END

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FREAK SHOW

A MOTORBOOTY Interview by NEIL STRAUSS

VON LMO

(PRONOUNCED "VON EL-MO")

Somewhere between the megalomania of Prince, the space-tripping of Sun Ra, and the kitsch merchandising of Devo stands Von Lmo, the legend no one west of Avenue A has ever heard of. After bursting upon the New York No Wave scene of the late '70s with a puzzling mixture of avant-rock, destructive antics, and a lot of interstellar rhetoric, Von Lmo vanished just as suddenly in a blinding flash of mylar and a humbling puff of failure. Now, over a decade later, he's back, ready to alter the genetic code of young people everywhere with his forward-thinking heavy metal, or at least get someone to finally pay attention to him.

Von Lmo's story is a ridiculous maze of fact and hyperbole. He claims to come from the planet X, the planet Strazar, or the black light dimension, though he has a Brooklyn accent and an Upper East Side phone exchange. In any case, he's been put on this Earth to wash "bubblegum metal" off the airwaves and "transmit the ultimate sound." However, his 1981 *Future Language* LP ("recorded in space" and "dedicated to the advancement of the United States space program") sounded more like what Jack, Chrissie, and Janet would have heard if they had visited a "New Wave" nightclub on an episode of *Three's Company*: manic proto-hardcore drumming, screeching electric-saxophone-enhanced riffs, and quirky faux-robotic vocals. Cuts like "This is Pop Rock" and "Leave Your Body" are just as amusing now as when they were first released, and while copies of *Future Language* have long since disappeared—Lmo even smashed his own 20 copies of the album in a Shannen Doherty-like fit of rage ten years ago—it's only a matter of time until some socially challenged fanzine enthusiast blows their nest egg putting out an Lmo CD reissue instead of repaying their college loans.

Around 1976, after years of humping pianos, gutting electric instruments with power tools in bands like Pumpo and Why You...Murder Me?, and boasting to anyone who would listen that he had once played drums behind Jimi Hendrix at New York's Cafe Wha?, Von Lmo and a street person named Otto "666" von Ruggins formed the misunderstood combo Kongress. With lead singer and amateur magi-

cian Jeffrey Krozier competing for attention with Lmo's 42-piece drum set, the band looked something like KISS with David Copperfield filling in for Gene Simmons: Krozier, in full medieval wizard costume and mohawk haircut, produced rabbits from his robe while dancing canes, exploding chairs, flash pots, and people on stilts cluttered the stage. After a show which almost left CBGB in ashes and Lmo impaled on a spear, Kongress was banned from the club for "various offenses of temperament, fashion, and occultism." Unemployable and dangerously confused, Lmo eventually broke his leg drop-kicking a Canadian off the front of his car while Krozier fled to Australia where he hung himself.

In 1977, Lmo hooked up with guitarist Rudolph Grey and formed No Wave's missing link, Red Transistor. Not only do some current white noise profiteers/Gap ad models owe an aural debt to Red Transistor, but ancient novelty punks like the Plasmatics borrowed gimmicks such as chainsawing instruments in half and Lmo's duct-tape tube-top straight from Red Transistor's live routine. *Billboard*, reviewing a Red Transistor show at Max's Kansas City in February 1978, observed, "There were calls for an encore, but that was impossible since most of the band's instruments lay in smithereens on the floor, dispatched to oblivion by Lmo with the aid of a fire ax."

In 1978, Von Lmo formed Von Lmo, "the group from the future." By now he was submitting requests to the government for $20 million so he could "save the world" with his music; communicating with Soviet satellites via television frequencies; making up slogans like "Music is murder: without music there is no murder" and "Destroy Earth" for his own designer line of blouses; exploring his thousands of different personalities (each existing in its own dimension, naturally); and just generally succumbing to the copious amount of drugs he had taken since the '60s.

Von Lmo's mind was soaring as high as his ambitions, and in late 1981, he crashed. Convinced he was riding the crest of the New Wave, Lmo borrowed money from virtually everyone to rent out the cavernous Palladium, then proceeded to scare potential concert-goers away with TV and newspaper ads featuring five grown men in silver spacesuits and red Moonboots; on the night of the show, unfortunate innocents had to be dragged in from the street to fill the empty club. Destroyed financially, and maybe mentally ("People have to stop drinking water and licking stamps," he told interviewers before the show, "bloody footballs dull the human brain"), Von Lmo dropped from view after one final gig at Max's Kansas City.

For ten years, no one knew where the disaster master was. Some said he was living with Nazis on Staten Island, others claimed he'd been sent to a nudist colony in Wyoming, while still others maintained that he'd been run out of town after branding his wife with the Von Lmo logo while going through an "urban cowboy" phase. Then last year, Lmo inexplicably resurfaced, decked out in a black lycra jumpsuit and a mysteriously full head of matching black hair, despite being nearly bald a decade ago. Offering a total concert experience that combines a laser-wielding lackey in the audience with a relentless merchandising assault—"LMO" refrigerator magnets (that don't stick), "International Transmitting Symbol for Universal Sound" medallions, and copies of his new CD *Cosmic Interception*—Von Lmo is back on the scene for one last crack at immortality. Recently, MOTORBOOTY spoke with him in his new body.

■ **MOTORBOOTY:** ***Where have you been the past ten years?***

■ VON LMO: To me, ten years is like the bat of an eyelash, a fragment of one second. In your time—in reality, so to speak—I was in a transition period. Everyone thought that I was dead, but I was just in suspended animation. Being in suspended animation, I gained a lot of incredible knowledge and lost 20 years off my life. I rejuvenated myself while I was gone. I'm in the body of a teenager now; sometimes I even get unpredictable boners and acne. If you look at pictures of me from 1980 and if you look at me now, you can see the enormous change. I look great! A lot of my new songs came from being in suspended animation; it left me with a subconscious message for each song. Also, having alien contact and relations with extraterrestrial beings from other galaxies and planets helped me to write songs like "Cosmic Interception."

■ ***Where was your body during this time?***

■ I've been in Germany a few years, then I went to L.A. Basically what I was doing was waiting for people to catch up. I just didn't think they were ready. I wanted to revamp my stuff, go back into the laboratory and make some new chemicals. I wrote over 600 songs in the last ten years. I'm not doing them now; I'm slipping back into the scene with the old tunes, but as soon as people get familiarized, then I'm going to start pulling out the new stuff. I think people have had enough. They want a change. I'm waiting for the major record deal, and then I'm going to unleash new visual ideas, which are things that have absolutely never been heard or seen before by the human eye or ear. My sound can really help you release your energies and frustrations. Through my music, you can have an orgasm; you can literally have an electronic orgasm that is better than sex. Well, at least as good as sex, but it's very possible that my music could take the place of sex in some cases. People are definitely ready now, and I'm ready to let them join me in achieving my ultimate goal, which is to establish a new sound on the music scene.

■ ***You say that your music can't be labeled, that it can't be described as anything but "Von Lmo." Explain.***

■ I don't like to be categorized as "alternative music." I like to just say it's "Von Lmo music" because my music is original to the point where it sounds like nothing else. I relate a lot to Glenn Miller. He had a very hard time getting across his point, then all of a sudden Glenn Miller was a new thing, a new phenomenon in dance. That's where I believe the Von Lmo band is at right now. We're like the Glenn Miller band of the '90s. If people would just take that risk, it's very, very, very possible that "Von Lmo" will be the next commercial sound. My music is for everyone, for all nationalities, all ages, all people, all sexes. If you like dancing, you'll love Von Lmo music. We've got the ultimate danceable robot beats going. If you like to throw yourself against walls, we have segments for that also. If you like to wave your genitals and humiliate yourself, we've got a little something for you too.

■ ***What inspired you to make this kind of music?***

■ My music is influenced by a series of things. One, UFO experiences and encounters with unidentified forces and force fields that I've had. In fact just recently I had a UFO experience right in my room, about two nights ago. I woke up out of a dream, and there was an alien force present. It was amazing: a light shaped like Hilly Kristal floating right in front of me as I woke up. I know it was there because the dogs were barking. I can't explain right now what it was, but it was real. My second influence is the effects of taking certain drugs which I don't take any more and don't advocate. In fact, I help people to stay away from the stuff. I'm into intellectual drugs, smart drugs, not drugs that can screw your mind up. But some of my songs were influenced by the type of drugs that can screw up your mind. I've made songs about LSD, like "Outside of Time"; "Crash Landing 88" is about cocaine. Coney Island is my third major influence: the carnival, circus frivolity, and the black light dimension. These combinations created the Von Lmo sound.

■ ***You always tell your audience to enter the black light dimension. What or where is it?***

■ I believe strongly in psychedelia. I'm into the psychedelic form of life which is the black light dimension. When people ask me where I was born, I tell them I was born in the black light dimension, which is a dimension other than what most people are used to. It smells a little like wet dogs, but it's a great place to be. It's very colorful, it has many interchangeable parts, it's flexible, and it can enhance your mind way beyond any other dimension. It's a psychedelic world where the lighting is black. When I say black light, I am referring to fluorescent lighting, the lighting that makes things glow in the dark, where everything is glowing and protruding in a very colorful manner.

■ ***When's the last time you were in this so-called dimension?***

■ I'm there right now. I'm there all the time. I don't leave that dimension. That's just one of the many dimensions that I am a part of. You have many dimensions too. That doesn't mean that you've seen them all. You need someone or something to bring out those dimensions for you, a catalyst. To go to the third, the fourth, the fifth dimension you need to be given the

tools to get there, and that's where music comes in. People are talking about Virtual Reality now; I wake up every day and I see *Fantasia* in my head. I have "The Ride of the Valkyries" in my pants; it's nothing new to me. My music can get people there; that's why the Virtual Reality people want to steal some of my music. Without my music, you can't get to these other dimensions. Music is everything. Music is life. Without music, there is only one thing and it's called death.

■ ***When did you realize your destiny?***

■ I knew from a very early age absolutely where I wanted to be, where I am right now. I could project that far ahead; I had it all down in my brain on this invisible paper called the "blueprint for a better universe." I've been playing music since I was six, with these cracked-in-half wooden hangers that I used to bang on my brother's bongo drums. The bongo drums transformed themselves into real drums years later.

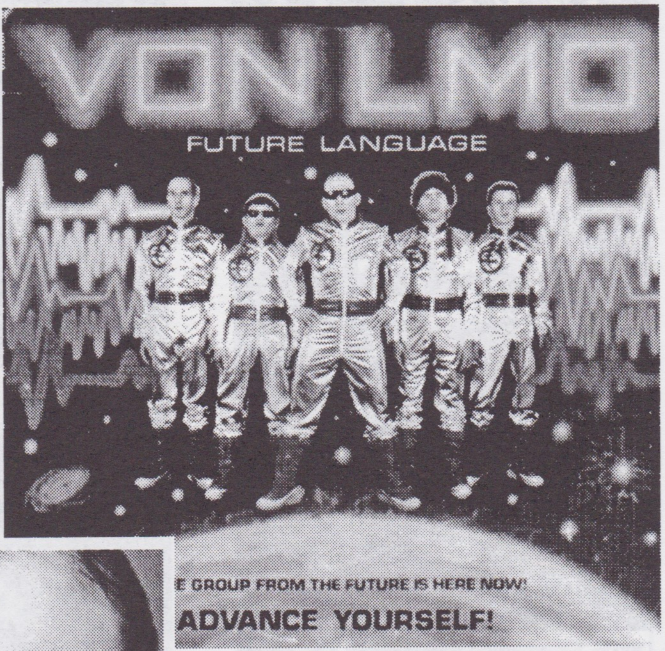
When I was 14 or 15 I would play hooky from school and go to Greenwich Village and hang out at a club called the Cafe Wha?, one of the hip places to go back in 1964. Jimi Hendrix was down there—this is before the Jimi Hendrix Experience—jamming around with his sound. At the time I was playing drums and I'd go up on stage and play with Jimi, and we were jamming together very intensely. Back then he was just formulating his style, too. Acid rock wasn't even known yet; I guess we were creating it together, subconsciously. Then he went to England and would have taken me but I was underage. I could have played with the Experience, I could have been the drummer.

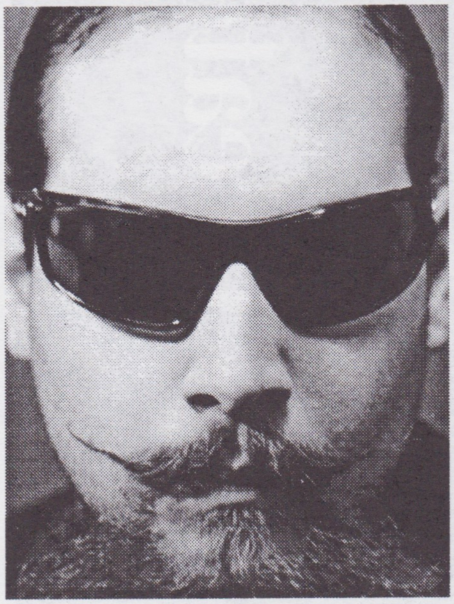
I would say that Hendrix was an early influence on me as far as guitar goes, but as far as the songs themselves, for a long time I didn't listen to music on purpose so that I wouldn't be influenced, and that's how I created "the Von Lmo sound."

■ ***I understand the Plasmatics stole your chainsaw act. How long had you been using non-traditional musical instruments before then?***

■ Around 1972, I was conceiving of doing things that were never done before, or even dreamed of. At the time, I thought of using inanimate objects—mannequins, plumb bobs, electric drills, Poulan chainsaws—and applying them to the instruments to create this unique sound; of course the visual effect was incredible too. I was also doing a series of unannounced piano solos at the Manhattan School of Music and Juilliard, and the students whose pianos I commandeered would just be baffled. The piano would start out white and end up red at the end of a performance. The keys would be covered with blood; I would literally cut right into the piano keys. It would be half an hour of playing with my hands, then eventually I'd break into "Rhapsody in Blue" with a sledgehammer. Then they'd arrest me.

When I formed Why You...Murder Me?, I was still doing instrumental surgery on an





An Lmo scrapbook. From left: "Von Elmo," 1975, the Elmo & Parakeet comedy duo, 1974, Future Language, Lmo in 1994.

operating table. I was taking guitars, cellos, violins, drums, anything I could get my hands on, and I would use the tools on the instruments while they were plugged in. But not only for a visual effect, mind you, but to create certain sounds—the sound was important, reaching the atonal flight, the atonal voyage as I would call it. And this was back before the so-called "Industrial Revolution."

■ ***You mean the late 1700s?***

■ No, around 1976.

■ ***Pumpo was even earlier than that?***

■ Pumpo was 1974. That was a band very heavily influenced by Coney Island and the freak shows there. Not that I was an advocate of freak shows; I was sort of friendly with the freaks, and mated with some of their females. In fact, I used a couple of them in the band. The concept was to find non-musicians, put them on the instruments, and let them play what they felt. I would find someone on the street, and if they knew how to play they couldn't join the band. Some of them were lonely, shriveled people who had nothing and were going nowhere. That was the concept of Pumpo, and that preceded any No Wave or industrial sound.

■ ***Later bands like Sonic Youth and Pussy Galore have actually cited Red Transistor as an influence.***

■ There was no one playing at CBGB then, except the Ramones and Suicide, and they still hadn't even learned how to play something as simple as a coping saw. With Red Transistor, I was the first person to think of playing power tools like the chainsaw—which, as you say, was ripped off by the Plasmatics. I know they made a cool million dollars off my ideas. In fact, Rod Swenson was supposed to manage me, but instead he came down with Wendy O. Williams and took notes and started the Plasmatics. I'm flattered that I can help somebody who doesn't have the capability of coming up their own ideas, but I sure wish they'd give me credit sometimes.

Red Transistor was two guitars and a drummer. The guitar styles were both original and different, and that guitar style is now being used and emulated in a lot of groups like Sonic Youth. I'm glad I influenced these bands, that's great, but only as long as they acknowl-

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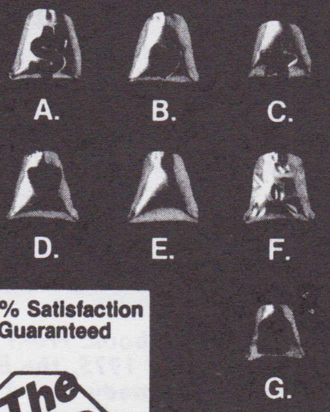

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edge where they got it from. Doing a comeback, you see, there are a lot of people who don't know about me yet, and then when they hear about Sonic Youth, they think, well, they did it first. They didn't; it was me, I did it first. This guitar sound was invented by *me.*

After Red Transistor, I formed the Von Lmo Band. John Lennon used to come to my shows. He'd come to Max's Kansas City, sit in the back, and sort of hide. I know he was a big fan. I probably would have done something with him had the tragedy not taken place.

■ ***With the Von Lmo band, you recorded your first full-length album,* Future Language. *I found it in a record bin with "Worst Record of the Decade" scrawled on the cover.***

■ Sometimes people just aren't advanced enough for my music.

■ ***Are there any plans to rerelease it?***

■ It's funny you should mention that because I was just talking to someone who has about 600 copies. It's crazy, because he's waiting for me to become a superstar and he wants to sell them for $200 apiece. Then I know someone else who has a little less and he's melting them down and using them to make elaborate, site-specific PVC sculptures. You can still find the record, but it's very scarce. One store is selling it for $125, and another is selling it for $1.

Actually, I have many other records. Max's Kansas City put out an album called *Von Lmo's Best Hits* or something, and then I have a Pumpo album that came out in 1975. The Pumpo album was recorded in Coney Island on the beach under a full moon at midnight in July 1974. We knew the people who managed the Cyclone ride. They let me plug in long extension cords and we went out to the beach. We actually played in the water; we had to wear rubber suits. And it was videotaped.

■ ***Can we see it?***

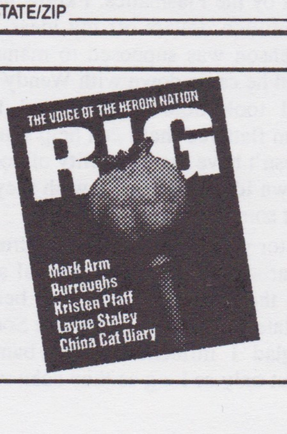
■ No.

■ ***I heard something about a Von Lmo doll.***

■ The guy that works our laser show invented it. He used to work for Ideal Toys—in fact he was the first person to invent Virtual Reality 20 years before it even existed. Basically it's a doll that shoots lasers from its eyes and plays the guitar. If you press a button there's a little tape recording of my guitar playing and the hands move. It walks, it talks, and it goes into suspended animation. Naturally, it's quite expensive, so it's not on the market right now.

■ ***How is the new Von Lmo band different from your old band?***

■ Nowadays we're not transmitting a disease, we're transmitting the ultimate sound. You're going to catch the Lmo wave whether you like it or not. This year I believe that the Von Lmo sound is going to come forth and generate throughout millions of people. What Hendrix was to the '60s, I can be to the '90s. If not this year, then probably next year. So be out there, watching and waiting because I'm coming. I'm going to land right in your world. ■



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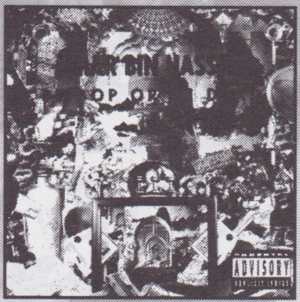

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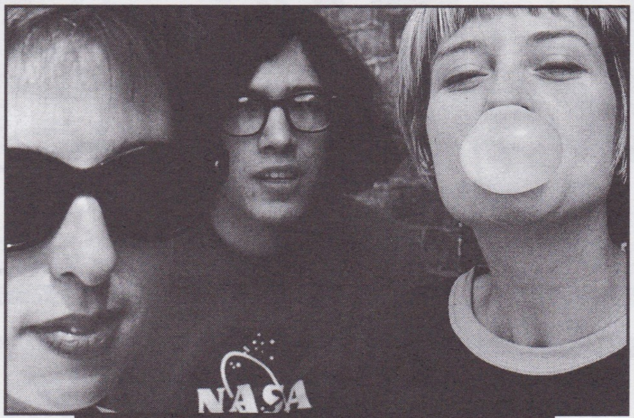

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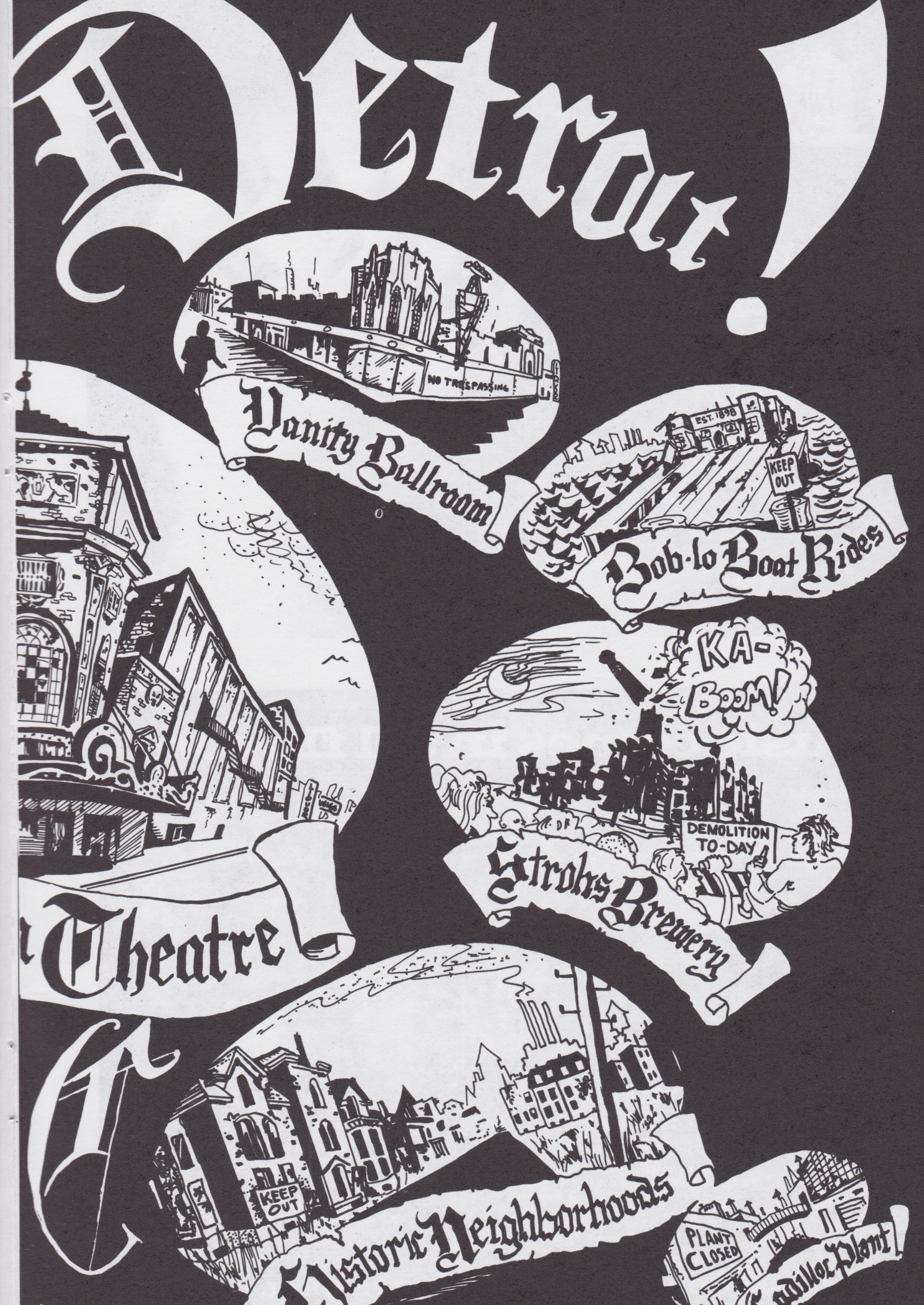

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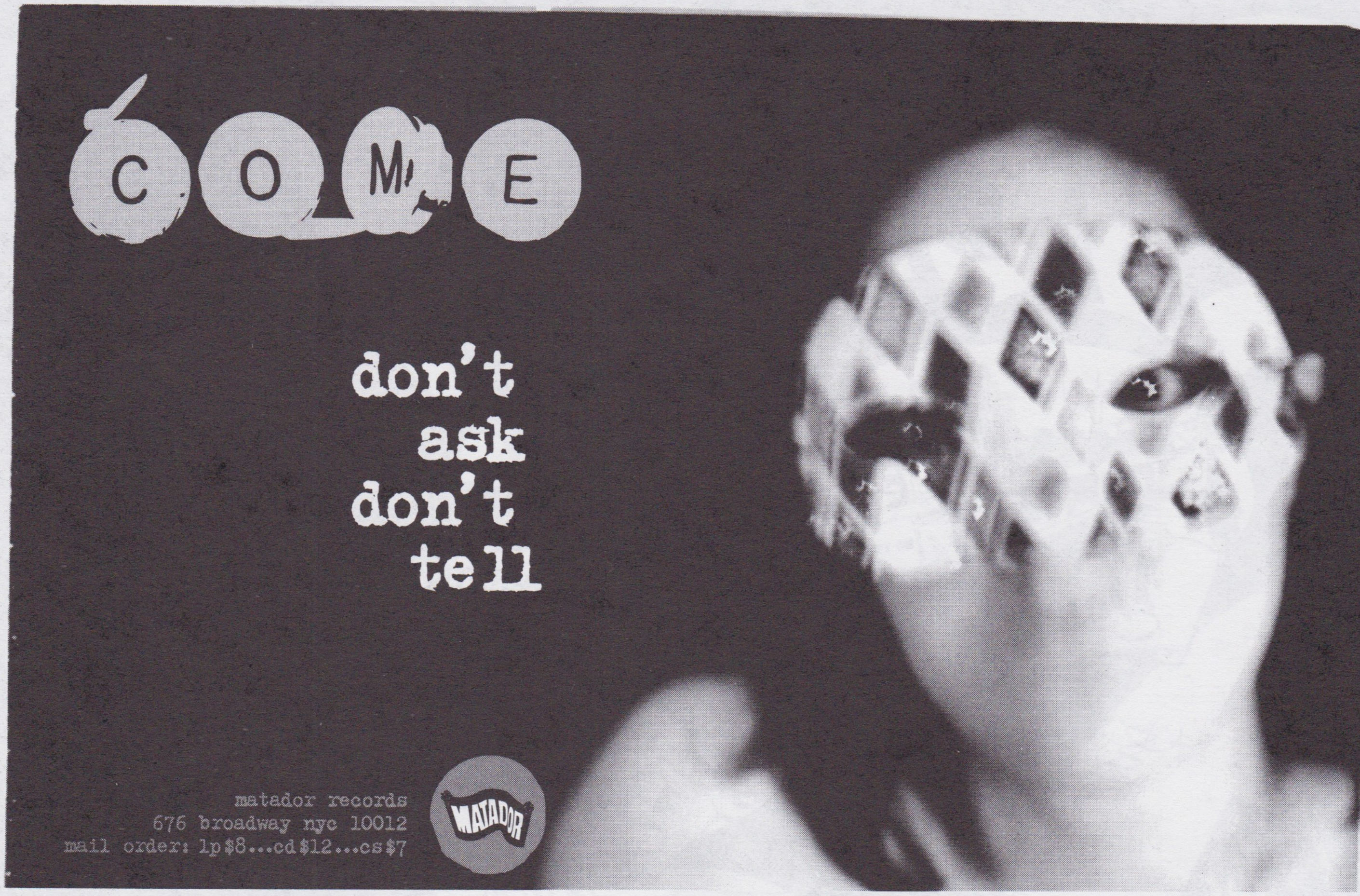

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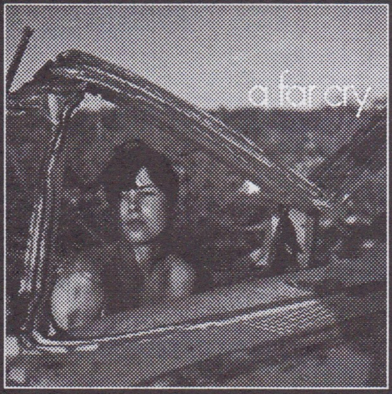

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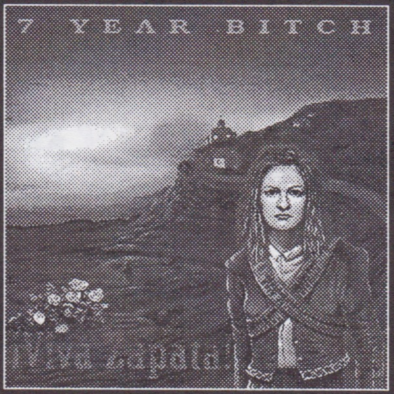

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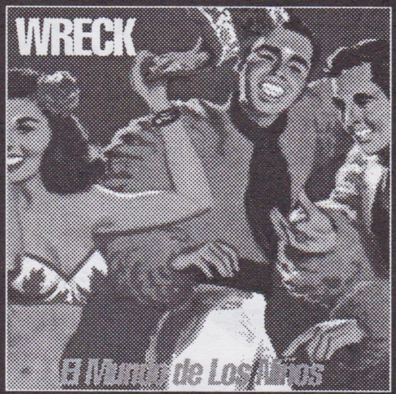

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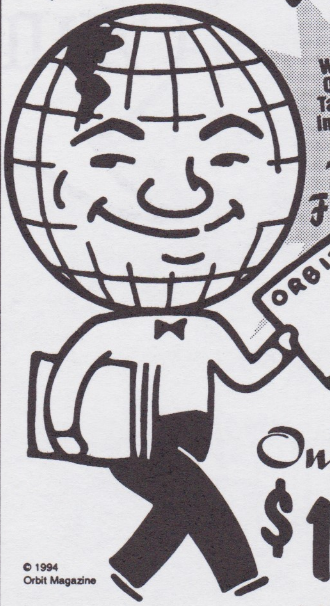

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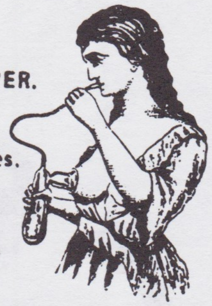

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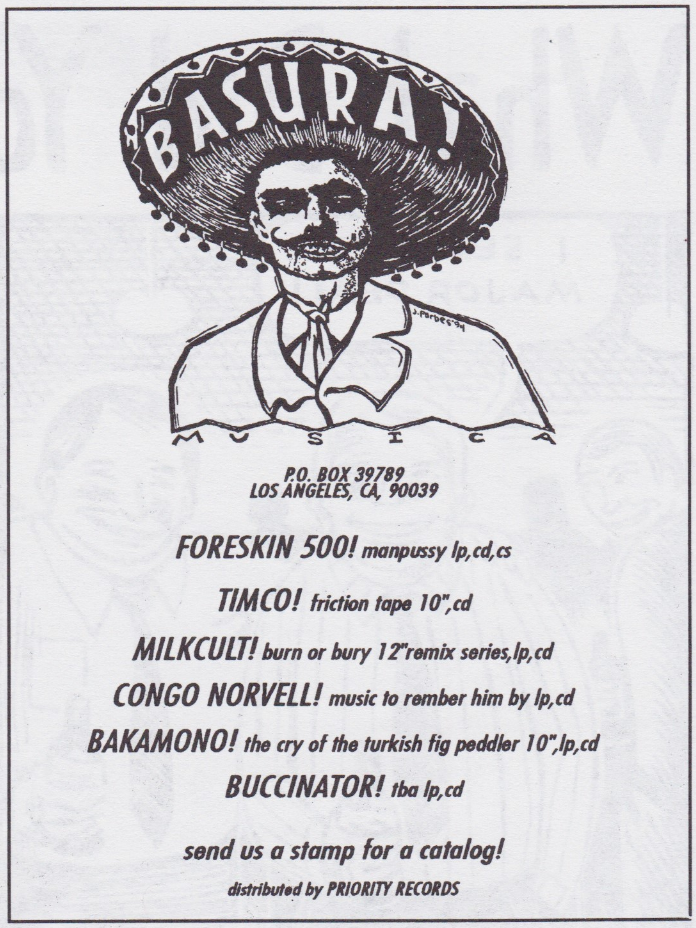
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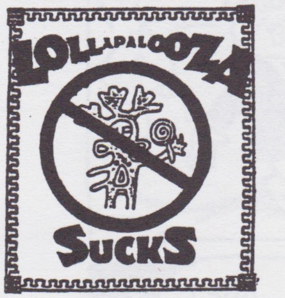

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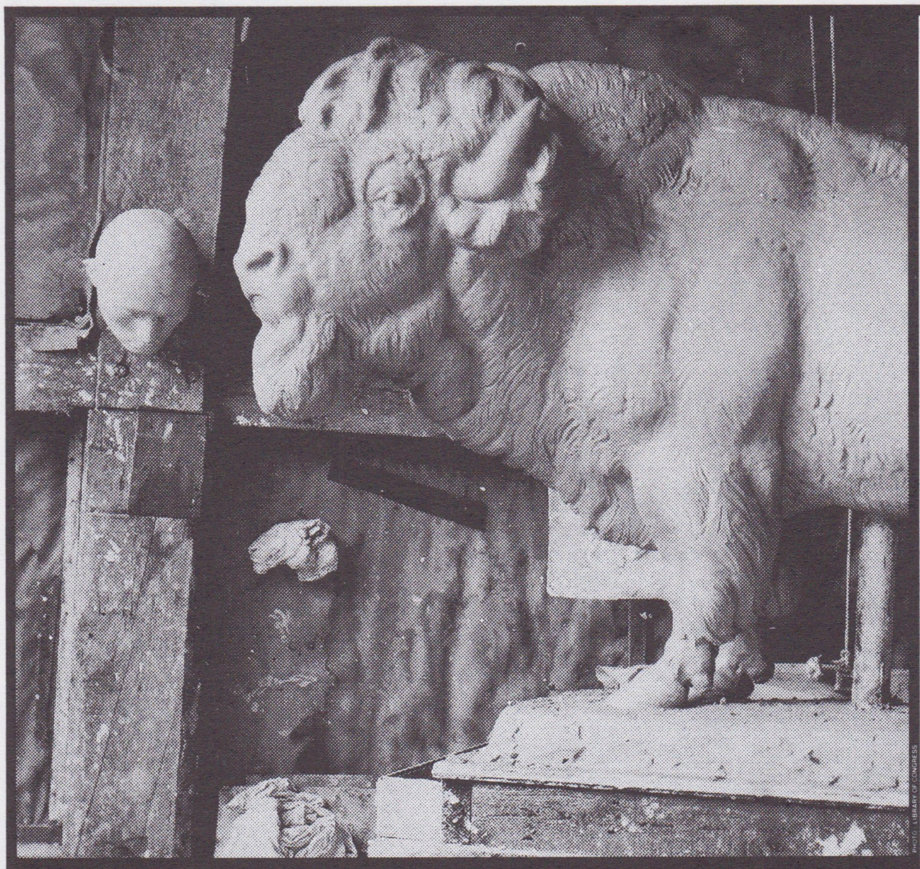

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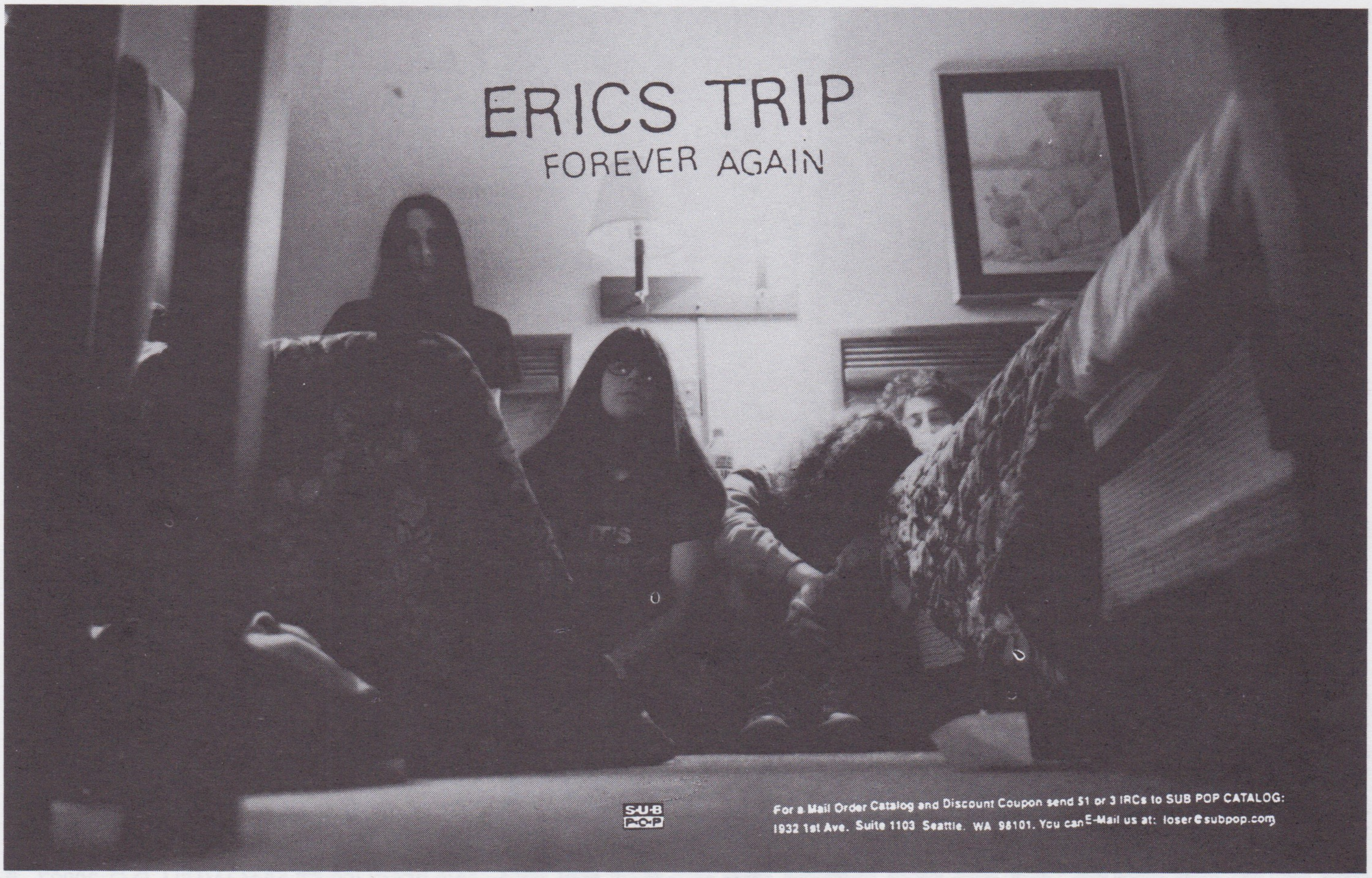

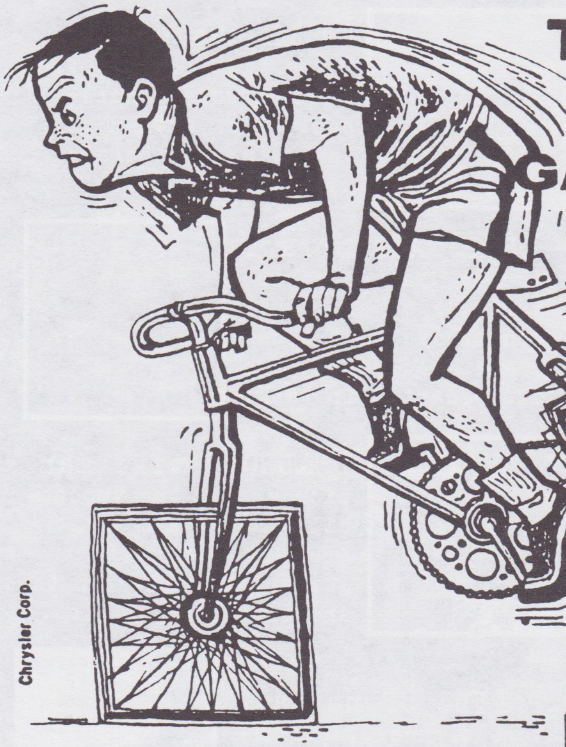

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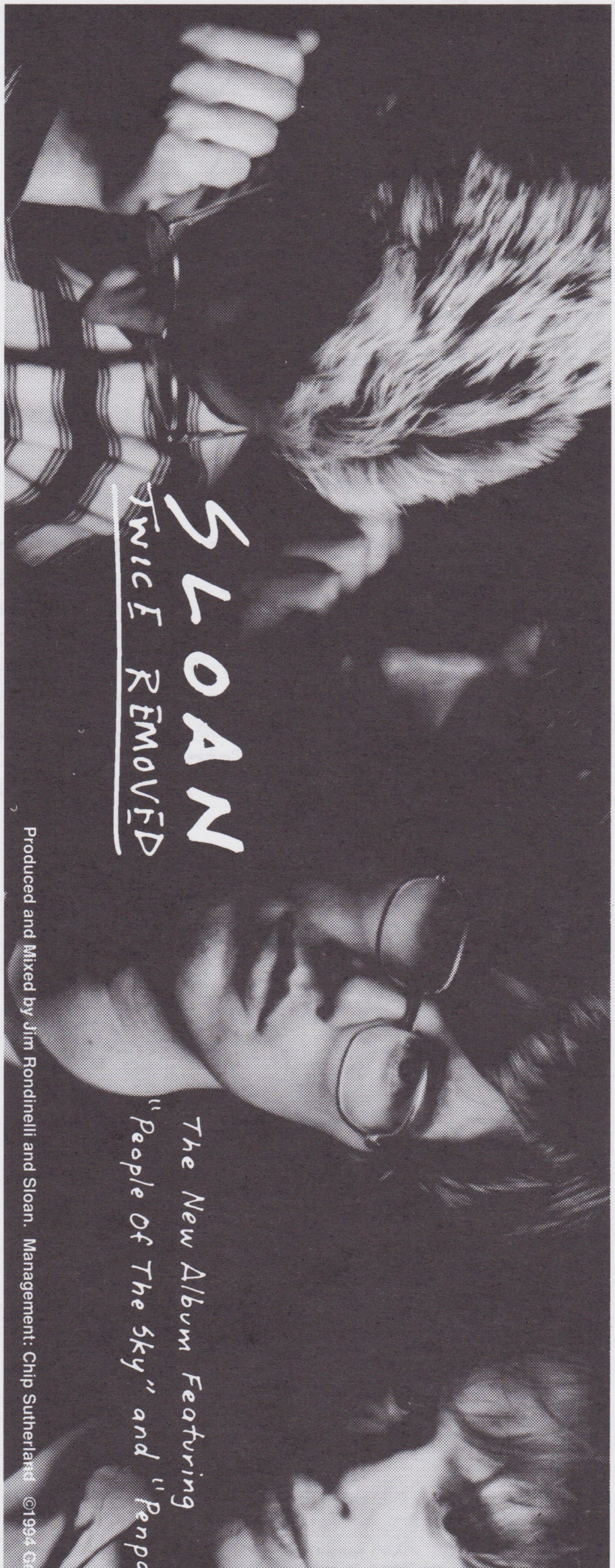

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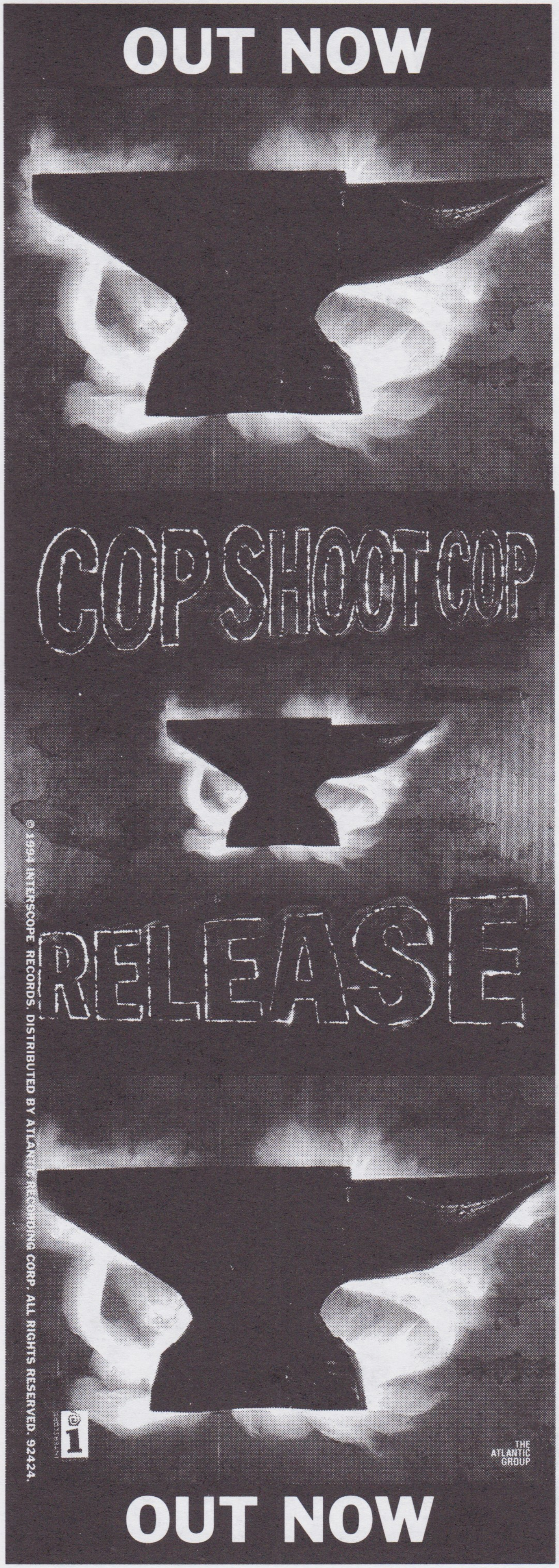
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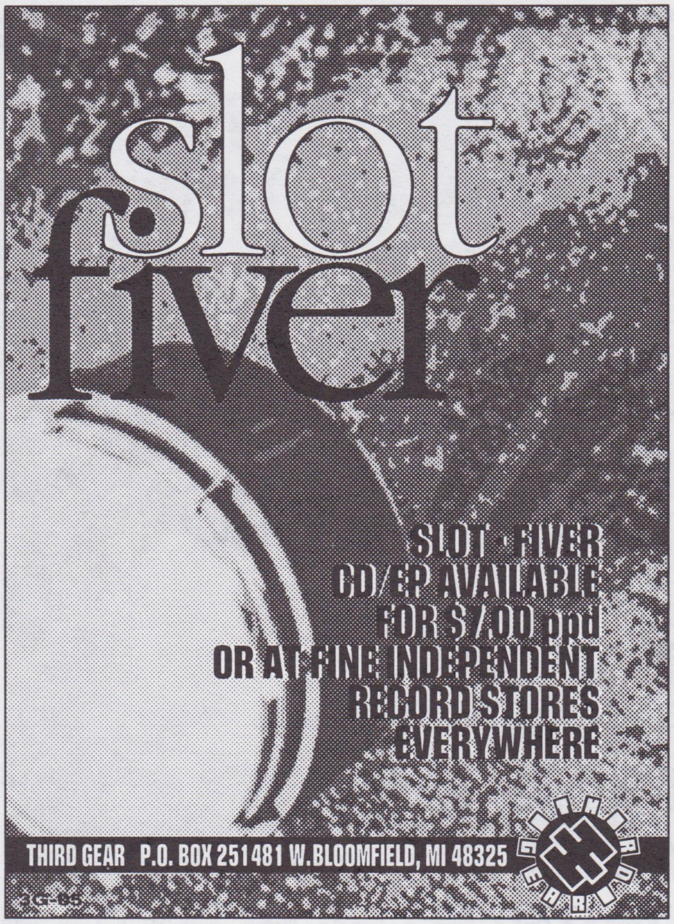
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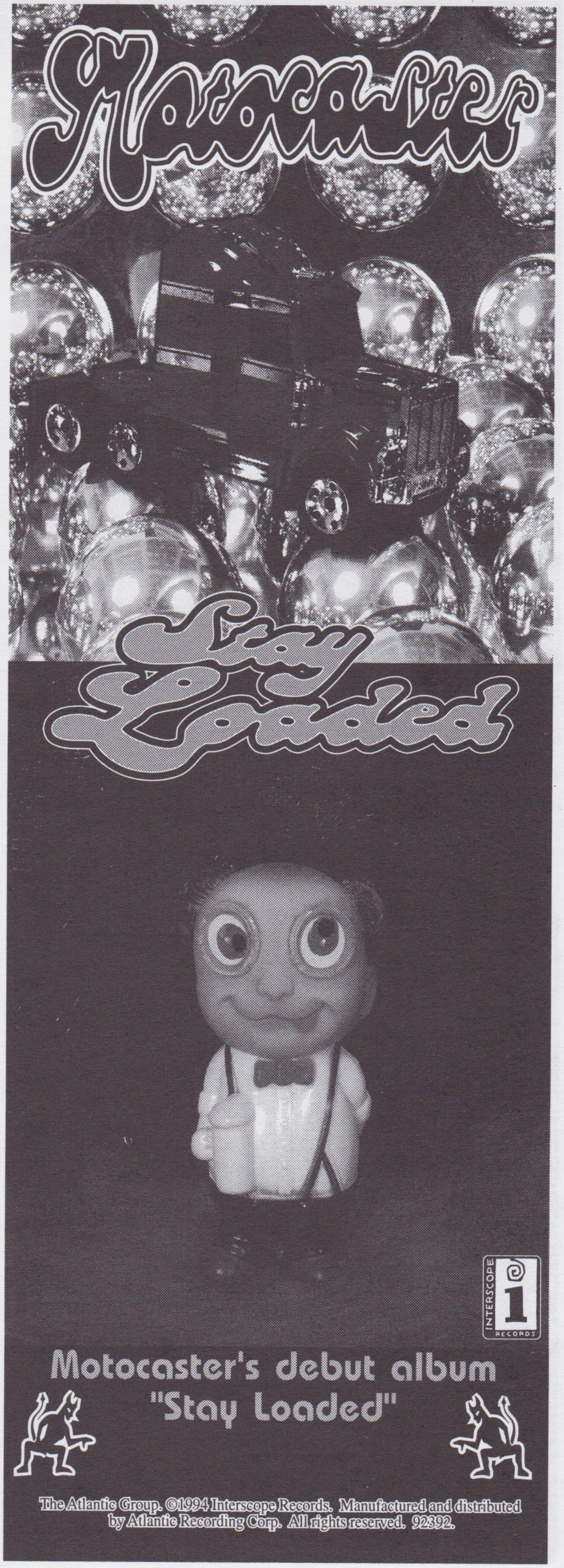
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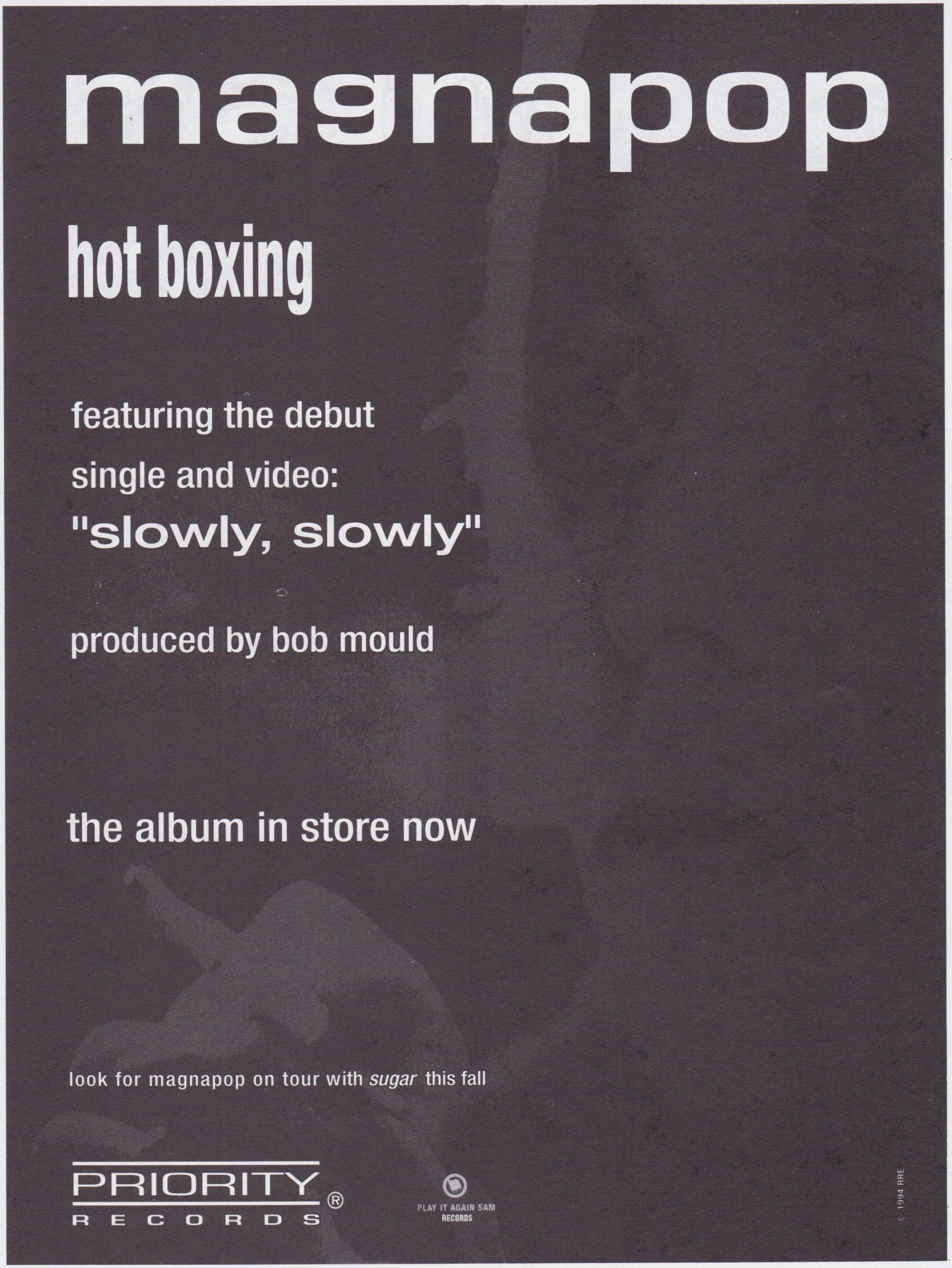
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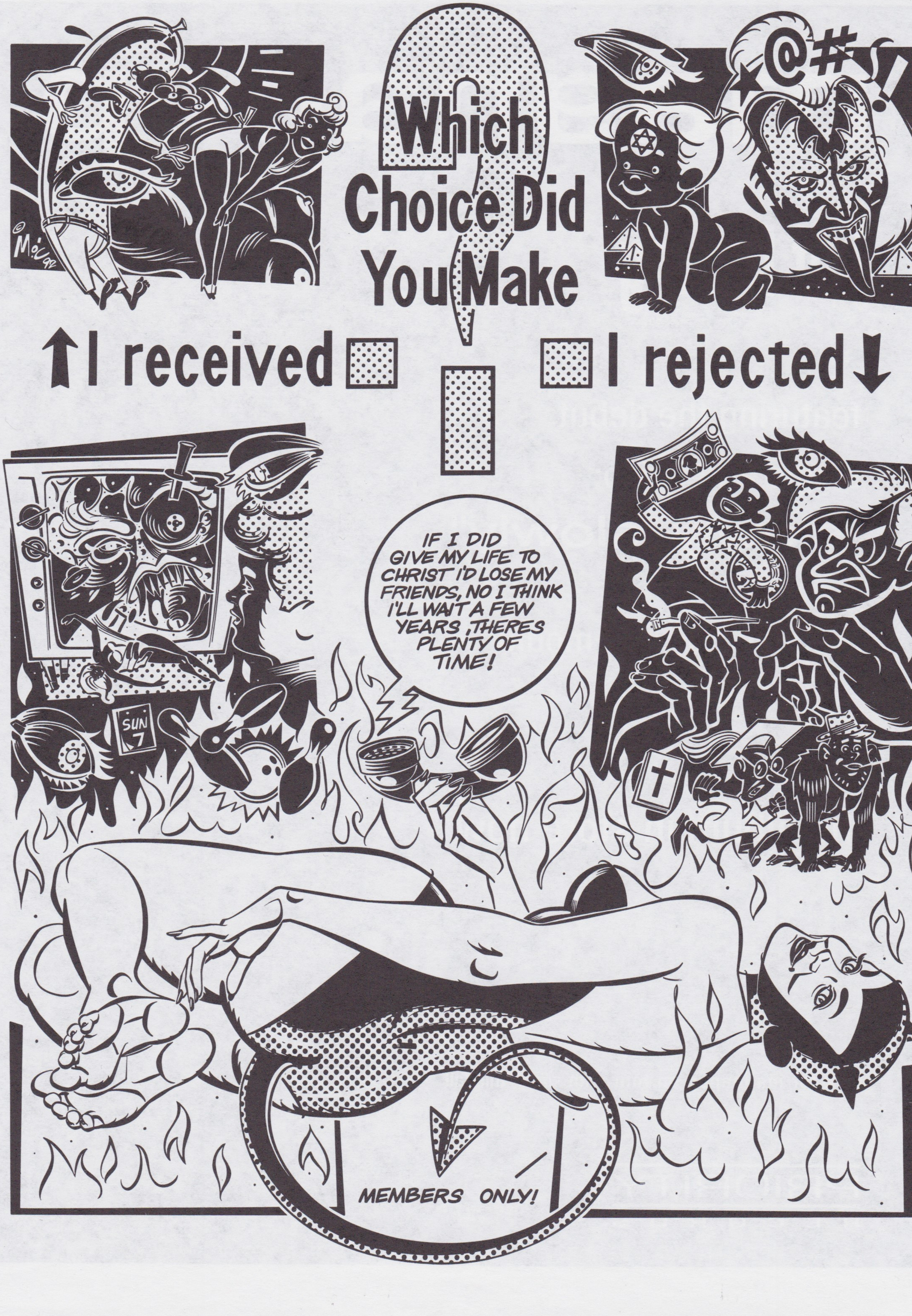
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